PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 152

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 152**

ELEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

AVON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL [*LORDS*]

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL

Orders for Third Reading read.
Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Academics (Earnings)

1. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the optimum rate of earnings of university academics from sources outside universities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The Department does not collect information about the levels of non-pay earnings among academics.

Mr. Dalyell: Would 20 per cent. of earnings and 20 per cent. of time be a reasonable guess?

Mr. Jackson: The answer probably varies very widely between different institutions and different individuals. We know from anecdotal evidence that in some cases earnings are substantial and in others not. The basic point is that if a pay claim is based on comparisons, like must be compared with like.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that there are retention and recruitment problems in certain subjects at certain universities? Does he agree that those difficulties are an argument for more flexibility in the academic pay structure, and that a shortage of engineers and scientists is no argument for paying exceptionally higher salaries to lecturers in Latin?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no point in people in universities, particularly the ablest, lecturing the Government about the brain drain if they are not prepared to take steps that are within their power to secure their continued employment in this country.

Higher Education (Capital Investment)

2. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on capital investment in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The Supply Estimates provide for allocations totalling £272 million in 1989-90 for capital purposes in higher education. This provision reflects the Government's commitment to a high-quality, cost-effective higher education system.

Mr. Macdonald: Can the Minister confirm that according to the Government's own figures capital expenditure on universities in 1988 was 16 per cent. less than in 1979, and that capital spending on polytechnics was 14 per cent. less? Is that not a deplorable record? What possible excuse has the Minister for such a decline in capital spending on something of such importance to the nation's economic future?

Mr. Jackson: I must point out that, of the £272 million that we have allocated for capital purposes, £84 million is for polytechnics. We estimate that sum to be roughly

double what would otherwise have been provided by the local education authorities. As for overall spending, I have said before and will say again that we in Britain spend a higher proportion of our gross national product on higher education than any other western European country except the Netherlands.

Mr. Bill Walker: When contemplating capital expenditure, does my hon. Friend take into consideration what we already have? Is so, will he bear in mind that the dental college at Dundee has superb accommodation, and that there is no need to spend vast sums on accommodational equipment there?

Mr. Jackson: I had the great pleasure of visiting Dundee and its dental school with my hon. Friend, and I was very impressed by what I found. That was reflected in subsequent decisions.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why has the Department so far failed to respond to the request and recommendation by the Select Committee on Science and Technology in the other place that £25 million extra capital spend be provided this year for medical research equipment throughout our higher education sector?

Mr. Jackson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, public expenditure requirements for higher education are reviewed every year in the public expenditure survey, and that is the appropriate occasion on which to consider the suggestion to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree with Dr. Terence Kealey that the universities could do much more to attract capital from outside sources, and that the universities are far too wedded to collective bargaining, jobs for life and dependence on the state?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with some of what my hon. Friend has said. Capital expenditure and investment in new plant, equipment and buildings is a prime area for which to raise funds from outside sources, which are often more prepared to give money for those purposes than others.

Higher Education (Age Participation Rate)

3. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current age participation rate for higher education; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The provisional age participation index for 18-year-olds for 1988-89 stands at a record 15·1 per cent. The trend since 1979 has been strongly upward. We expect this autumn to see more than 1 million students in higher education for the first time in this country.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those figures show a towering record of achievement in the past decade, and of providing opportunities for the young people of this country? Does he further agree that such opportunity will be even more enhanced, come the greater emphasis on fees in the funding of higher education?

Mr. Baker: In this celebratory week, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Over the past 10 years there has been an increase of over 200,000 students in higher education, one of the biggest increases in our history. I agree with my hon. Friend that the announcement that I made last week on increasing the public element of fees will stimulate universities, colleges and polytechnics to enrol more students. I am glad to see that that announcement has been so widely welcomed throughout higher education.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is a strong feeling in west Cumberland that the further education college should be able to provide a three-year degree course, if only linked to Preston, whereas at present it can provide only the first year, with students having to travel to Preston for the subsequent years? Will the Secretary of State take a personal interest in the matter and see whether the rules can be changed so that this right is available in west Cumberland.

Mr. Baker: I will look into what the hon. Gentleman has said. Only 10 days ago I was in his part of the world and visited the further education college in Barrow-in-Furness, which is being expanded and rebuilt at a cost of between £4 million and £5 million. I was impressed with the provision of that college.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is not the same.

Mr. Baker: I accept that it is not the same, but it is quite close. I will have a look at what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, of the large rise in student numbers in higher education over the last 10 years, the increase in those attending polytechnics, of about 30 per cent. to 300,000, is the most impressive? Does he further agree that, given the fact that polytechnics are particularly well placed to offer flexible entry and modular courses, particularly for older people who seek retraining, they will be in the forefront of higher education over the next 10 years?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that polytechnics will follow their success of the last 10 years, because most of the expansion has been in the polytechnic area. This has been achieved because the polytechnics have been flexible. They will grow even faster now that they are not under the control of education authorities. As my hon. Friend has indicated, by being resourceful, entrepreneurial and devising new courses related specifically to the needs of students, they have achieved this growth. I am sure that they will represent one of the major elements of expansion in the next 10 years.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Perhaps I may be permitted to interrupt the orgy of unjustified self-congratulation taking place amongst the Conservatives. Will the Secretary of State confirm that, as per the answer to me of 10 February from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds in higher education has gone down, not up, under this Government? Will he further confirm that the public expenditure White Paper projects a fall in the real value of expenditure on higher education between now and 1992? In view of the claims that he is making about fees and increased numbers and the comments last week about what a great victory this represented over the Treasury, will he tell the House by how much the budget for higher education will be increased above the White Paper figures, or is this yet another example of how far the reality of the Government's resourcing of education falls short of its rhetoric?

Mr. Baker: The participation rate for 18-year-olds has increased from 12·4 per cent. to 15·1 per cent. over the last 10 years. What was being said a few moments ago was not at all an orgy of self-congratulation. It was a simple and modest statement of the continuing success of this Government over the last 10 years, projecting even greater success over the next 10 years.

Mr Marlow: Could my right hon. Friend look at the mental age as well as the physical age for acceptability to higher education, so that in future we can prevent such futile and disgraceful gestures, as the award of office by a students union to a convicted murderer?

Mr. Baker: I have already said—and I say again—that the decision by a very small minority of students at the London School of Economics is both despicable and shameful. It is deeply offensive to the family of PC Blakelock. It has been condemned by the London School of Economics, and by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and by many people across the country. I very much hope that that decision will be changed. The reputation of the London School of Economics should not depend on a small minority of the loony Left.

Science Budget (Additions)

4. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what addition has been made to the science budget to meet the cost of salary increases of technicians employed by research councils, following the recent award to technicians employed by universities.

Mr. Jackson: The technicians' union has not yet agreed the pay offer made to it last month by the employers on the universities committee for non-teaching staffs in universities. I understand, however, that the negotiating parties are meeting again today.

Mr. Hood: By how much has the cost of research councils risen since the Secretary of State's announcement of this year's science budget?

Mr Jackson: I do not have that information immediately to hand, but I remind the House that in last year's public expenditure survey there was a substantial increase in the research council's vote of about 10 per cent. in real terms. That ought to be enough to cope with the current rises, including the rise in technicians' salaries. However, we shall have to examine in later years the consequences of this year's public expenditure survey.

Dr. Bray: It was clear, however, that a substantial proportion of the 10 per cent. increase would not be directed to both the new and the expanded research programmes, about which the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister made such a song and dance, particularly in relation to the global environment. A substantial part of that increase has had to be earmarked for salary increases for technicians and scientists. Have the Government been successful in obtaining an increase in the science budget comparable with that which they have obtained for the universities?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman is always trying to look a gift horse in the mouth. There was a very substantial improvement in the amount of money made available last year. The hon. Gentleman speaks as though salaries and staff are not part of the cost of the science vote, but they are a major part of the cost of that vote. That cost is reflected in the increase.

Secondary School Expenditure (Staffordshire)

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in Staffordshire in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79, at constant prices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): In actual cash, Staffordshire spent £535 per secondary pupil in 1978-79 and £1,420 per secondary pupil in 1987-88. At 1987-88 prices, those figures are £1,100 and £1,420 respectively.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures show a satisfactory increase in expenditure per secondary school pupil in Staffordshire since the Government came to power, despite the Opposition's remarks? Does he think that that increase has been accompanied by an improvement in standards?

Mr. Butcher: A considerable amount of information and research shows that there is not a direct and quantifiable correlation between the level of spend and the level of academic results achieved. That is an issue that we may address in a later question. The real growth in Staffordshire has been made possible because the Government have been very generous. The Staffordshire figures, and those that have been repeated in local education authorities across the country, show that it is a misnomer to use the word "cuts" when one refers to expenditure on education.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that the figures have been achieved despite the Government's support, which led to a cut in the rate support grant? The figures are a tribute to Labour control in Staffordshire. Will the Minister confirm that, during the last five years of Labour control in Staffordshire, the examination results of secondary school pupils have risen, whereas the national figures have remained fairly static? Staffordshire's figures have advanced considerably, thanks to the Labour council's excellent control.

Mr. Butcher: As I said earlier, the academic results of local education authorities vary considerably. I know that the Opposition do not like league tables, but there are some fairly clear figures that show that the high-spending education authorities often achieve the least favourable academic results, while those that spend the least per head often achieve very favourable results. I shall not comment on Staffordshire's exact performance, but it is the Government's generosity that has made the general improvement possible.

Primary Secondary Schools (Accommodation)

6. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to improve the quality of accommodation provided in primary secondary schools.

Mr. Butcher: Local education authorities and governors are responsible for school buildings for which my right hon. Friend makes capital allocations and grant

available. For 1989-90 my right hon. Friend has announced capital allocations to LEAs of £352 million. LEAs will also have substantial spending power from capital receipts which they are able to use on improving the quality of school and college buildings.

Mr. Hughes: Given that last year 25 schools in England and Wales had fire damage costing over £250,000 each, and that the fire officer in Tory-controlled Norfolk has just advised his county council that there are 11 schools with no adequate means of escape and which are a high fire risk and 56 other Norfolk schools which do not comply with the codes of practice, is it not about time that schools were brought within the remit of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 so that the fire service inspects them and sees what a lamentable state many of them are in? Is it not time that, earlier rather than later, we brought our schools up to a decent standard to protect children from the risk of death or injury and that we had the capital investment from the Government to do the job?

Mr. Butcher: Of course, this is a question which the whole House takes very seriously but compared with other types of buildings, the fire safety record of schools is excellent. Of course, we should never be complacent and local education authorities have to set their own priorities on repairs and maintenance budgets. In terms of the cost of arson, which normally takes place outside school hours, we have a serious problem, and it is for that reason that I appointed a group of experts to look into the whole question of the cost of arson and vandalism, which has been variously estimated as being between £49 million and £100 million a year. That is intolerable, but of course, the safety question is very much to the fore and I shall look carefully at what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that for a relatively small outlay, for example on fire alarms and the like, schools could be made much safer places? Will he further confirm that he continues to chair a working group inquiring into arson and vandalism and give the House some idea of how that group is progressing and when it might be reporting to the Department and the House?

Mr. Butcher: I shall be glad to so report to the House in due course. I have now chaired this special group twice. We have an action plan of 10 points. We are targeting savings in a number of areas and, for the sake of comparatively small expenditures, I believe that we can make major savings in the £49 million to£100 million that I mentioned earlier, which of course can be used to much better effect in resourcing schools in basic things like books and other forms of support for teachers.

Mr. Corbett: Has the Minister forgotten that the Government's own figures show a £3 billion backlog in repairs and maintenance of our schools? Will he confirm that one million children are still being educated in very inadequate conditions? What will he do about that?

Mr. Butcher: The figures that the hon. Gentleman has just used should be examined very carefully. He knows that it is the practice of most local education authorities to submit a bid to my Department. In the main an average of approximately 34 per cent. of that bid goes to LEAs as a cash allocation. I appreciate that repairs and maintenance, for example, is a heading that we could look at. I cannot anticipate at this stage the outcome of the public expenditure survey but I am aware that there are improvements to be made in quite a large number of schools. In the first instance it must be for LEAs to set their priorities when they put their bids to us.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is my hon. Friend happy with the way in which local education authorities allocate this capital expenditure? In Derbyshire there has been an increase in the capital available to the county council over the past two years, from about £5 million to £11 million. Is he aware that there is great concern, particularly in my constituency, that schools are not being treated fairly, perhaps because of their political complexion? I have to say to my hon. Friend and to the Secretary of State that there is growing concern about the way in which local authorities are, as we believe, abusing their position. Is my hon. Friend further aware that All Saints primary school in Matlock has been waiting now since 1983-84 for the continuation of very important work to bring it on to one site? Does he agree that it is not acceptable that there should be huge increases in the capital given to county councils and for them then to use it in wholly political exercises in various constituencies in the county?

Mr. Butcher: Derbyshire county council seems to devote the bulk of its efforts to blaming the Government for everything. The school that my hon. Friend mentioned had the first phase of its development approved under the Conservative Administration but is still waiting for the second phase. Derbyshire has rarely been out of the top five for capital allocations to the shire counties. It receives 52 per cent. of its claims for expenditure compared with a national average of 34 per cent. In my view, Derbyshire should stop playing politics and get on with the job.

Mr. Fatchett: Have not capital allocations for school maintenance decreased by nearly 30 per cent. in the past 10 years? Is that not because we have a £3 billion backlog in repairs to our schools and 1 million children are condemned every day to take their lessons in substandard accommodation? That accommodation would not be acceptable in private sector schools to which Cabinet members send their children. Why can we not have the same standards in the public sector and the money to carry out repairs so that our children can have decent schools and decent opportunities?

Mr. Butcher: It is regrettable that the hon. Gentleman makes comparisons with the private sector, because the private sector often operates under conditions which can be described as spartan. However, the hon. Gentleman raises a serious matter. He does not take into account the fact that capital receipts have boosted expenditure considerably. Capital receipts boosted the £352 million that I mentioned earlier to about £670 million. Of course we should like to provide more for repairs and maintenance, but the House must await the outcome of the public expenditure survey as far as future plans are concerned.

Teacher Training

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allowance is made for the in-service training of teachers in *(a)* school-time and *(b)* school holidays for heads, deputies and all other teachers; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Participation in in-service training is part of the professional duties of a teacher under the pay and conditions document. The amount of time devoted to in-service training in school hours and outside school hours varies according to need and circumstances. In the Government's view the five non-contact days should be used mainly for in-service training.

Mr. Greenway: Can my hon. Friend confirm that there will continue to be an expansion of in-service training for heads, deputies and all teachers? Can she also confirm that such training is much more expensive if it is undertaken in school time because replacements have to be arranged for the absent teacher, head or deputy? Could not incentives be provided for such teachers to undertake more in-service training in school holidays which, after all, are not short?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will be interested to know that some £50 million has been set aside this year in training grants for teachers undertaking in-service training, and an additional £50 million in education support grants to help in training to prepare for the national curriculum. My hon. Friend asked about in-service training during school holidays or outside school hours. Many good local education authorities already arrange much of their in-service training outside school hours and many very professional teachers prefer to do it then.

Mr. Flannery: Is the Minister aware—I am sure that he is—that about a fortnight ago the Secretary of State answered a question in the Select Committee, and that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is pursuing the same subject? The Secretary of State referred to the fact that the number of supply teachers is totally insufficient. Large numbers of teachers who wish to take part in in-service training cannot because there are not enough supply teachers to replace them.

Is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State made it plain in the Select Committee that he intends to cut the number of supply teachers—another severe cut—so that teachers, who, since he came to office, have had more work after school than ever before will have to go out at night and weekends for in-service training, instead of continuing with the present arrangements for which they need more supply teachers?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman should know that many local education authorities are working hard to sustain and increase the number of supply teachers. They have some good schemes, and well-organised local education authorities have a considerable number of supply teachers to cover for other teachers who are doing in-service training. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have reaffirmed what I have just said to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), in reply to his question about in-service training out of school hours, insofar as it is important that professional teachers should, as much as possible, increase their professionalism by undertaking training both in and out of school time.

Mr. Favell: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the present system for the appraisal of teachers? Three or four years ago, we heard a great deal about it. The medical profession has now accepted the need for the medical audit, which is appraisal by one's colleagues. Would it not be sensible to consider a similar scheme for teachers?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will know that there are *provisions* in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 for the introduction of appraisal schemes. Six pilot schemes were undertaken in local authorities and those are currently being assessed by the Department of Education and Science, with the intention of introducing appraisal schemes in other schools in the not too distant future.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister accept the view of Her Majesty's inspectorate that primary education is critically short of teachers with expertise in science, technology and mathematics? As primary schools will embark on teaching the national curriculum core subjects next term, what is the Minister doing to ensure that every primary school teacher has the in-service training necessary to embark on the project?

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Lady will know, we are embarking on a substantial in-service training scheme for primary school teachers, as well as secondary school teachers. With the introduction in September this year of the core subjects of the national curriculum, primary teachers will need to undertake some in-service training in science and mathematics in particular, although many primary school teachers, having seen the syllabuses and the curricula for mathematics and science, are happy with them and believe that they are well prepared already to undertake most of the work.

Teacher Shortages (Barnet)

8. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to solve the problems of teacher shortages in Barnet.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's action programme on teacher shortages is aimed, in particular, at tackling the problem of teacher recruitment in London and the south-east.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one reason why there are shortages of teachers in the Prime Minister's constituency, parts of Derbyshire and elsewhere is the ever-changing job description that the Government are organising on behalf of teachers in relation to the national curriculum and the GCSE examination, but that almost certainly the main reason is pay? It is high time that the Government were prepared to pay teachers the same 26 per cent. increase that the top company directors received last year.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should attack both the GCSE and the national curriculum, as I understand that his Front Bench has adopted both of those as part of its own programme. My right hon. Friend has received the report from the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions and has announced that he is prepared to accept the report in full.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Is my hon. Friend aware that, whatever the teachers' position in Barnet, in Labour Brent, parents are queuing up to get their children into schools in Conservative Barnet rather than in Labour Brent? Is my

hon. Friend aware that the excellent fifth year and seventh year results in Barnet and Harrow are some of the best in the country?

Mr. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is hardly surprising that parents in areas where the schools are not producing the results are opting to send their children to schools in authorities such as Conservative-controlled Barnet, where the results are obviously good. Barnet is the top authority in the country for good academic results.

Mr. Straw: Is that why parents in Barnet are queuing up to send their children to schools in Labour-controlled ILEA and is that why the net flow there is towards ILEA and not away from it? If the Minister is, as she claims, winning the battle on teacher shortages, why has the education officer in Barnet, Mr. Gill, had to write a desperate letter to every teacher and parent in Barnet, asking if they know anyone, "friends, relatives or neighbours" who would like to be a teacher in Barnet?

Why, in the past seven years, have teacher resignations in primary and secondary schools risen by 260 per cent.? Is that what 10 years of Thatcherism has done to the Prime Minister's own back yard?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, it is not. The 10 years of Thatcherism have been successful, not only in Barnet, but right across the country and are proving to be most successful in education which, in previous years was so deplorable that it had to undergo a substantial change and the substantial reform that was introduced last year by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that until 1974 graduates could be employed by local education authorities in shortage subjects without a postgraduate certificate of education? Will she look at the system used in the United States where graduates are trained part-time in the evenings and in the holidays while they are teaching? Will she also consider a system of paying extra money to teachers in shortage subjects and in shortage areas?

Mrs. Rumbold: We shall most certainly look at both those suggestions. My hon. Friend is aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is about to introduce schemes for licensed and for articled teachers which will allow graduates to be articled or licensed and to teach in the classroom while gaining their professional qualifications.

Licensed Teachers

9. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many licensed teachers he estimates will be recruited in the next two academic years.

Mr. Butcher: The number of licensed teachers will depend on the suitability of candidates presenting themselves for licensed teacher status and the extent to which local education authorities and school governing bodies wish to appoint them.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister agree that the most suitable people to help in teaching are those who are already there, but that they are being forced out of education because of the lack of morale under the Government and the difficulties with pay and conditions and with operating under the various changes that the Government have introduced? Would it not be better to tackle those things and to start talking to teachers once again through some proper machinery instead of trying to introduce failed and under-qualified ex-executives into teaching?

Mr. Butcher: Teachers' pay has increased by 40 per cent. in the past three years. In looking for signs about whether morale is improving or otherwise, the House will recognise that the response of the teaching profession to the major reform of GCSE and the extent to which teachers are opting for training, with enthusiasm, on the national curriculum are not signs of a profession that is demoralised. We have a great deal of hope for the future but, of course, we want to continue to address the difficulties of geographical and subject teacher shortages.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: In connection with the recruitment of teachers and other related issues, and bearing in mind that the voice of teachers is divided between at least four unions, will my hon. Friend and his colleagues look again at the idea of a professional teachers council to represent and to raise the professional standards of teachers in every way?

Mr. Butcher: That idea has been mooted fairly often in the past few years. Some teachers in the profession would like an organisation that would speak for them as a professional body and not as a politicised, unionised body. That issue is still open. Either through ignorance or otherwise some of the teachers' unions have made assertions on the subject of licensed teachers which are quite untrue. At the moment, graduates without initial teacher training represent about 7 per cent. of qualified teachers in secondary schools and 39 per cent. of teachers in secondary schools are not graduates. What we propose will do nothing to dilute the professionalism of the profession.

Mr. Straw: Will it be possible for applicants who have completed two years of higher education but who have failed their teaching practice on either a BEd or a PGCE course to be eligible for licensed teacher status?

Mr. Butcher: Let us assume that such an individual has an HND, which is not a graduation in the strict sense of the word. That person would be eligible to do two years' teacher training in a school. Only if he satisfies those who must assess him for that can he enter into the profession. I am not aswering an unequivocal "yes" to the hon. Gentleman's question. I would like to look at it in a little further detail and write to him. But everyone has to have two years' higher education, O-level GCSE in English and maths and two years' training in the schools. I would have thought that those were all excellent proposals.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Considering the difficulty of recruiting suitably qualified people in the teaching profession, can my hon. Friend confirm the reports that the city technology college in Nottingham, which had advertised 13 teacher posts, has had over 900 teachers expressing interest in them and 250 firm applications?

Does this not suggest that, where the school regime is right, teachers will want to go there?

Mr. Butcher: I say to anyone who has any doubts about the ethos and efficacy of CTCs that they should go to Nottingham and talk to that excellent head and director.

He is going to build and staff an inner-city school which will change the life chances of inner-city children. That is what CTCs are all about. He is making those children fit for the world of work and they will be whole men and women into the bargain.

Religious Education

10. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the provision of non-Christian religious teaching as part of the national core curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: All maintained schools must provide religious education but it is not part of the national curriculum. The content of religious education is for local determination.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that parents who belong to minority faiths are increasingly concerned at what they feel to be inadequate provision for worship and education in their faiths where there is a substantial number of children of a particular faith in a school? Does she recognise that this anxiety has increased since the Education Reform Act 1968 and is shared by parents of the Hindu, Moslem, Jewish and other religions? Is she proposing to do anything as a result of the representations that she has received to meet these concerns?

Mrs. Rumbold: Certainly. We have taken careful note of the various representations that have been made to us. In terms of the act of worship, of course, the provision for parents to be allowed to withdraw their children remains as it was under the Education Act 1944. It may help the hon. and learned Gentleman if I say that not every act of worship in a county school will have to be either wholly or mainly broadly Christian in character, provided that the majority of acts of worship are. The head will have to take into account the family background of the pupils concerned when deciding on the precise nature of worship to be provided. As I have said, parents still have the option to withdraw their children if they so wish.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend not agree that teaching Christianity properly within the core curriculum provides a foundation for the teaching of comparative religion and indeed the degree subject of theology taught in many universities uses Christianity as the foundation and brings in other religions in the comparative framework? In that context, does she not agree that it is proper that Her Majesty's inspectors should monitor the teaching of religious education in the core curriculum?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is certainly right that, as my hon. Friend says, religious education should be monitored by Her Majesty's inspectors when they are looking at what is happening in the basic teaching of religious education. It is also right that religious education should refleect the central place of Christianity in our religious traditions. But the Act requires that local syllabuses should take account of the teaching and practices of all the principal religions in Great Britain. I hope that that will go some way towards answering my hon. Friend's question.

HM Inspectorate (Performance Indicators)

11. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what performance indicators are available to him in measuring the effectiveness of Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The performance of Her Majesty's inspectors may be judged by the timely and effective advice they provide to me and my Department on policy matters; by the number, range and quality of their reports and publications, and their inspections; and by the extent to which I am kept appropriately informed about educational standards and trends.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend consider that the retention of the core of Her Majesty's inspectors will be necessary once the full effects of the Education Reform Act 1988 translate themselves into the beneficial results which will derive from society's greater involvement and interest in education, particularly in the light of the answer given earlier this afternoon affecting the teacher appraisal schemes?

Mr. Baker: I am sure that parents will be taking a much greater interest in the performance of schools and their children as a cumulative effect of the result of our reforms. I am certain that there will be a continuing and important need for Her Majesty's inspectors to visit schools. They have increased their number of inspections. During the past 10 years, since we have been in office, the number of inspectors has risen from 430 to 490.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State arrange for inspectors to consider safety in schools? Will he despatch an inspector immediately to a first school in my constituency where all the electric switches are made of metal and where the electric plugs are sparking? That presents a real danger to the nursery and primary school children and the staff at the school. Will the Secretary of State also send an inspector to the Bradford Conservative-controlled education authority and ask why it is refusing to do anything about those dangers at a time when it has put £5 million into balances and has cut the education budget by millions?

Mr. Baker: There have been substantial increases in capital expenditure in Bradford over the past few years, and that is what that money should have been spent on.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Sillars: Is the Prime Minister aware that one of the major policy blunders of the past 10 years has been her attempt to use Scotland as an experimental area for the immoral poll tax? Is she aware that, despite the chicken-hearted failure of the Labour leadership,

hundreds of thousands of Scots will not pay and together that army will wreck the poll tax, sink her flagship and inflict a major political defeat upon her later this year?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that under Scottish law, Scotland had already undergone a rating revaluation, and the results were so horrific that we had to change the law. I understand that the official Opposition may want another rating revaluation on a capital basis, which would be even more catastrophic. We have changed to a community charge, which is very much better and fairer. I understand that 99 per cent. of people have already registered, which would indicate an intention to fulfil their duties under the law. They are not only interested in how much they can get, but what is their duty to pay.

Q3. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Hugh Rossi: In welcoming my right hon. Friend's personal initiatives over matters of atmospheric pollution, the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect, may I ask her whether anything new has emerged from the much-publicised meeting that she had last week with Ministers in Downing street?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will have seen some reports. The most obvious thing to come out of the meeting was the fact that we need a great deal more scientific evidence. Because there are so many variables to feed into the several climatic models, it is difficult to get scientists with a single opinion on how the climate in the several regions will be affected. Secondly, we noted the excellent progress being made in energy efficiency. We are now using less energy than we were in 1973, with an enormously increased gross domestic product. Thirdly, the most practical and immediate concern was the damaging effect of the destruction of tropical forests. That subject will be raised, I think, at the European summit and also at the economic summit, when we discuss how we can increasingly use aid to preserve those tropical forests.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister tell us why mortgage rates have been higher for longer under her Government than under any other British Government?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows why they are high at the moment—*[Interruption.]* It is to ensure that inflation never rises to the 26 per cent. it did under the Labour Government.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall her pledge to achieve what she called "reasonable mortgage rates"? Why has she never ever managed to keep that pledge?

The Prime Minister: We have done extremely well in that 3 million people have chosen, under this Government, to own their own home who would never have had that opportunity under Labour. Maybe the proof comes in home ownership and in how very well those who have purchased their homes have done in increasing their value.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister trying to say that we have had higher mortgage rates for longer under her Government because more people, just as in every previous year, have ended up buying their own houses?

The Prime Minister: No. I am saying that 3 million more families own their homes than was the case under Labour and that mortgage rates and interest rates are high because we are determined not to go back to Labour's inflation rate of 26·9 per cent. per annum.

Q5. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cash: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the continuing efforts of the European Legislation Committee to involve the House in more effective scrutiny of European legislation? Is she aware that the French Parliament, following our example, has introduced similar measures? Does she also agree that the more democracy there is in the European Community the better?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members are deeply concerned about the amount of legislation that is coming from Europe. It comes to the Scrutiny Committee of course only when it has got to the legislative stage. My right hon. Friends and I are deeply concerned about the number of proposals in the pipeline. It is extremely difficult to get the full facts about them and we must follow them up at that stage too. I agree with my hon. Friend that we need the scrutiny of national Parliaments and that the more we have the better. We also need to keep a very careful watch on the tendency of the Commission to acquire an increasing competence on many matters that are not necessary for the single market of 1992. That would result in an extremely large bureaucracy, which would be quite wrong.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that when many millions in England and Wales go to the polls to vote on Thursday—the 10th anniversary of her election—they will hope—*[Interruption.]*—that their single vote counts twice; once for a good councillor, and once against the policies of her Government—against the privatisation of water, against the smashing up of the Health Service and against the poll tax? Does she realise that many millions in Britain, including those who voted for her Government, now ache for the removal of this damaging, disruptive and divisive Government?

The Prime Minister: Nonsense. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the privatisation of both of those industries was in the last election manifesto and that we won that election by a 100 majority, for which many people are and will remain profoundly grateful? We are going to win the next one too.

Q6. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Baldry: Has my right hon. Friend had time to consider the Policy Studies Institute report "The School Effect", which shows that too many of our children in too many of our inner-city schools are being betrayed by too many Left-wing education authorities? Instead of pursuing a pretence of multicultural policies, it is time for those local educational authorities to start helping to fulfil

the potential of all their children and to concentrate on traditional ways in which to improve educational standards.

The Prime Minister: I have read reports on that report in the newspapers. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is anxious that it be published in full because it shows enormous variations in educational standards between schools of similar pupils. That is not right. We must make every effort to see that every child has a good education whatever their background. That is why my right hon. Friend is introducing a national curriculum and is spending so much time on teacher training and extra teacher training so that every child can have a really good education whatever local authority he is in.

Q7. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pendry: Having attended the memorial service at Liverpool last Saturday and having witnessed at first hand the grief of that football-loving city, may I ask the right hon. Lady now to consider that the most fitting and lasting memorial to those who tragically died in Hillsborough last month would be for the Government to provide the funding for a multi-purpose sports facility at Merseyside, in the same spirit as she set aside £19 million for egg producers earlier this year?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. Some football clubs have spent a great deal, and others—not all in this country—are spending an increasing amount on the standards of their stadiums. The hon. Gentleman will know to which I refer. There is a good deal of money, as he knows, in football. Much of it—perhaps too much—goes on transfer fees and perhaps too little goes on stadiums. We all know that a good deal of the income from football pools also goes on improving stadiums. The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with all of those aspects. I went to the memorial service and of course I shared the grief of the people. I got very much the impression from them that, above all, they wanted all-seat stadiums in the future.

Q8. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Twinn: Is my right hon. Friend aware that better street lighting can cut crime and cut the fear of crime? Will she endorse the findings of the urban programme and the estate action programme, as well as of the British parliamentary lighting group's surveys in Edmonton and Tower Hamlets, that money spent by local authorities on improving street lighting is money well worth spending in the fight against crime?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend draws my attention to the work done by the British parliamentary lighting group and to projects in Edmonton and Tower Hamlets, which seem to have shown that where more money is spent on lighting, the level of crime goes down. If that is so, we must look at those results carefully and see whether they can be furthered because we are anxious to reduce the level of crime as fast and as much as we can.

Mr. Barron: Has the Prime Minister read press statements about the attitude of general practitioners in the Vale of Glamorgan in relation to the Government's White Paper on the Health Service? Will she consider withdrawing that White Paper and funding the NHS in a proper manner and not put into effect the actions that are now proposed?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, and we do not take any lectures on funding the Health Service from Labour Members—*[Interruption.]* I repeat what I have said in past weeks: for every pound that Labour spent on the NHS, Tories are spending £3. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell that to the people in the Vale of Glamorgan. So, if they want to go back to Labour, that will cut resources, cut hospitals, cut the doctors, cut the nurses, cut their pay and cut the service to patients. Tell that to them.

Q9. **Mr. Gardiner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gardiner: Further to my right hon. Friend's reply to the question by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), although the precise terms of the contract with GPs may be open to negotiation, will she agree that it is imperative that the proposed reforms of the NHS should go ahead and that the welfare of patients demands that the NHS cannot just go on as it is?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. When the reforms in the NHS are through, it will be a much better service for patients than it now is. I understand why Labour Members do not want the reforms to go through. They know that when they have gone through, their protests and citicisms will be rumbled for what they were —wholly hollow and wholly misrepresentative of the true facts.

Miss Lestor: Is the Prime Minister aware that at the end of her decade as Prime Minister, there are in this country 75,000 missing children? The Government inform me that they do not collect figures nationally. The Children's Society, however, does. What does she intend to do about this problem?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is well aware of the authorities that have a concern to find missing children. She is also well aware that the standard of living, the standard of education and the standard of health introduced under this Government give children a far better chance than they ever had before.

Q12. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Would the right hon. Lady now care to answer the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor)?

The Prime Minister: We have increased the number of police and their pay so that they can carry out all their duties, including that of finding missing children. We have increased the numbers way beyond what the Labour Government did.

Sir Peter Hordern: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer? Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread interest and admiration for the reforms affecting trade unions, doctors, dentists, lawyers, bankers and brokers, but that when it comes to proposals which may have the effect of closing half the village pubs, does she agree that she may have gone a step too far?

The Prime Minister: I confess that I am not an expert on the subject although it concerns other members of my family very much. Of course, I am concerned, because of the villages, about the future of the village pub. There is increasing debate about the report, I am sure that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will take that into account when he considers what to do about the report.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Summer Time Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Point of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will no doubt have heard, during Prime Minister's Question Time, the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) ask a question about more street lighting. I did not have an opportunity to give notice to the hon. Gentleman that I would raise the matter, but it is a classic illustration of the urgent need to reform the rules on Members' interests to require Members to declare an interest if it is relevant at the time. It is important that we should all know that the hon. Member for Edmonton is a consultant to Thorn Lighting Ltd. It is a classic illustration of the need to reform the rules regarding the Register of Members' Interests so that in such circumstances the Member would be required to declare an interest.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman could draw that to the attention of the Select Committee, which has already discussed the matter and reported upon it. The Select Committee said that, during Question Time, interests that were declared in the Register did not have to be mentioned on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Four members of the Labour party who are serving on the Dock Work Bill are sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, and none of them has declared that in Committee.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to confirm that if the rules of the House required it and if it was thought necessary in the interests of the House, I would be only too pleased to declare the interest.

Aircraft (Freedom from Smoking)

3.33 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I beg to move.

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to permit all passengers on certain aircraft to travel in an atmosphere free from tobacco smoke.

I accept immediately that anyone proposing a measure of this kind must face frankly the question of principle whether the law ought to have a part to play in conferring freedom on some people at the expense of the removal of the freedom of others.

I do not intend to sermonise against smoking. That is a free choice for adults to make for themselves. I would not support a Bill which prevented people from smoking on grounds of harm to themselves, any more than I would support a Bill making illegal the eating of food considered hostile to good health. What I maintain, however, is that people should, in certain circumstances and in certain places, have the freedom to enjoy a smoke-free atmosphere and that that freedom, like the freedom to walk the streets without being assaulted, inevitably rests on lawful restraint being imposed on the freedom of others.

That principle is not novel. It has been conceded over and over again in the House, particularly in the past century and a half, to all Governments of every political complexion in the area of public health and safety. Examples are both commonplace and common sense. It is upon that ground that I base my Bill, including enforcement of its provisions.

My Bill is not about whether someone should smoke, but where. It is not concerned with the effects of smoking on the smoker, but with the effects of smoke on the non-smoker. It is specifically limited to aircraft flights of up to three hours' duration, which effectively means domestic and European destinations. Many other countries have acted already, and I shall refer to that in due course.

All but diehards now accept that there is a serious risk of smoking damaging the smoker's health. It is also generally accepted that, while the risk is small by comparison, there is a risk of damage being done to the health of non-smokers from breathing in tobacco smoke —known as passive smoking. Should any doubts remain on that score, the 1988 fourth report of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health, chaired by Sir Peter Froggatt, should dispel them.

Such reports were predated some 400 years by the famous one-man royal commission of that scourge of tobacco lovers, James VI of Scotland and I of England; a man of whom it has been said that he was never drunk, but he was never quite sober. His conclusion was that smoking was a custom

> "loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs and in the black, stinking fumes thereof nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

With that language he would make rather a good modern press officer for the British Medical Association.

King James later clashed with Sir Walter Raleigh, widely credited with having introduced tobacco into Britain. I do not condone the somewhat extreme retribution exacted from Raleigh by King James who had him executed in 1618, ostensibly for treachery and to please the Spanish. But who knows—perhaps he was the first tobacco martyr.

[Mr. David Martin]

On the subject of executions, it is interesting to note that the only example of a statutory right to smoke is to be found in the Executions of Sentences of Death (Army) Regulations 1956 and 1959 under which, besides the right to be visited by relatives and a priest, the prisoner under sentence of death

"shall be permitted to smoke".

I presume that that official connivance can be justified on the ground that for a person in such a position considerations about the long-term injurious effects of smoking are somewhat superfluous.

In the confined spaces of modern aircraft, the impossibility of escape from fumes, despite attempts at segregation of smokers from non-smokers, increases the health risks, as well as causing irritation, coughing and so on.

My own recent experience of that involved my 10-year-old daughter being forced to sit next to a smoker on a British Airways scheduled flight to Portugal this Easter. I had paid in full nearly five months in advance for all six family seats together. I had rung the airport two days before to emphasise our non-smoking requirements. We arrived at the Gatwick check-in desk in good time only to be told that my wife and I could not sit together with our four young children aged three to 10 years except in the smoking area. My 10-year-old daughter was coughing for half the journey and plaintively asked me, on a fully booked flight, "Can't I sit somewhere else, Daddy?" The answer was no, she could not.

I took the matter up afterwards with British Airways only to be told—in the age of computers, remember—in a letter from its customer relations executive:

"It is impracticable to reserve seats for passengers at the time of booking".

British Airways should try running a theatre and tell people that.

It is practicable to take customers' money months in advance, but apparently it is not practicable to guarantee anything in return, except the gamble of having a seat next to one's children with the added chance of sitting next to a chain smoker thrown in. That shows a dreadful lack of consideration for the customer, wholly at variance with the attitude of airline staff, who could not be more pleasant and helpful.

However, credit must be given for BA's advances with regard to smoking on flights. Generally, the smoking of cigars and pipes is not permitted, so the freedom question has been resolved there. Also, it does not permit the smoking of cigarettes on domestic flights, as is the policy of Air UK on its flights, including those to the Channel Islands. Research indicates that, even among smokers, such policies are welcome, They help them to control the habit and mean that one less activity or pastime is associated with smoking.

For safety reasons, no smoking is permitted in the toilet facilities of aircraft. I fail to see why it should be considered safe to permit it in confined cabin spaces, particularly on tiring night flights, when there is a risk of someone nodding off.

Other countries have already acted to protect not only paying passengers but cabin crews, at a time when it is increasingly recognised that protection for non-smoking employees in workplaces is both reasonable and necessary, particularly where air conditioning and heating arrangements restrict access to direct fresh air. In the United States, flights of up to two hours became no-smoking, by law, from April last year. In that country, an airline must guarantee that a person can book a non-smoking seat, which is a sensible provision and one that I hope we shall adopt.

Air Canada has a no-smoking law on flights that last up to two hours. Scandinavia also imposes such restrictions. The Australian Government banned smoking on all domestic flights from December 1987. Noel Coward said in his play "Private Lives" that China was a big country. The same applies to Australia.

In summary, my Bill is a modest attempt to carry matters a stage further in this country. The time is ripe now, as it was in the 1950s with the belching chimneys of London, to put the health and safety considerations of the non-smoker before the considerations of freedom of the smoker, and to call in aid the law in the limited respects that I have outlined. I commend my Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Martin, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Graham Bright, Mrs. Marion Roe, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. David Evans and Mr. Matthew Carrington.

AIRCRAFT (FREEDOM FROM SMOKING)

Mr. David Martin accordingly presented a Bill to permit all passengers on certain aircraft to travel in an atmosphere free from tobacco smoke. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 131.]

Opposition Day

[9TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Mr. Speaker: I regret that the order of the two motions on the Order Paper for today's Opposition business does not accord with that announced by the Leader of the House last Thursday. I propose to revert to our original intention, that the National Health Service debate should come first and the teacher shortages debate should come second.

NHS White Paper (Doctors' Response)

3.43 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House, noting that every independent organisation representing medical opinion has recorded the deep concern of doctors at the White Paper 'Working for Patients', and recognising that the concern of doctors arises from the serious threat to their patients reflected in Her Majesty's Government's determination to introduce market forces into health care, regrets that Ministers have failed to respond to informed criticism other than by impugning the motives of their critics; affirms its support for the basic principles of the National Health Service that patients should receive the treatment they need, not the treatment they or their doctor can afford; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to prove its proposals by pilot projects before imposing them on the profession, and to postpone any legislation for a structural change in the National Health Service until it can be first submitted to the electorate in a General Election.

Mr. Speaker: I have to tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Cook: When the former Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore) announced the review to a rather startled nation, he said that the impact on the nation's health could be as dramatic as the discovery of penicillin. The outcome of the review had a dramatic and electrifying effect on the medical profession. It was so dramatic and electrifying that it has been rejected by every organisation representing medical opinion, not just by the British Medical Association.

I noted at last week's Health Question Time that the BMA held a special place in the affections of Conservative Members. That place is somewhere between the National Union of Mineworkers and members of the national dock labour scheme. The review has also been rejected by the joint consultants committee, representing ten royal colleges. It was also rejected by the Royal College of Nursing. Almost exactly a year ago, that college gave the Secretary of State's predecessor a standing ovation.

Some of the opposition from organisations representing medical opinion does not seem to have been anticipated. A fortnight ago, in reply to a question, the Prime Minister quoted, approvingly, a doctor who said that the White Paper

"embodies so much of what the Royal College has been working for over the years."—[*Official Report;* 11 April 1989; Vol. 150 c. 736.]

Six days later, the Royal College of General Practitioners voted, by 49 votes to one, to reject the White Paper.

In a statement explaining why it could not support the White Paper, the college said:

"As an academic body, it must state that, just as it opposes medical treatment based on guess, so it must regret the treatment of a whole health service on hunch."

Even those who have tried desperately to like the White Paper have found it a forbidding task. The Institute of Health Services Management, which represents overwhelmingly members on short-term fee contracts to the Government, did the best that it could, but even it could not avoid coming out with the statement that the White Paper was likely to produce in the Health Service "confusion and fragmentation."

Nor is it only the institutions that have come out against the White Paper. The notion that a few activists in those bodies are manipulating the membership is pure fantasy. Dozens—scores—of doctors' meetings have been held around the country, but not one has found a majority in favour of the White Paper. I shall mention only one of those meetings: in Barnet, 170 doctors, including doctors from the Prime Minister's constituency, assented unanimously to the proposition that the White Paper could not work.

I know that Conservative Members are well aware of the strength of feeling among doctors: I know that because I keep being sent the letters that they have sent back to doctors who write to them. I treasure particularly a letter from the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon), who wrote to a general practitioner in his constituency, replying to his comments on the White Paper:

"I must tell you that I have never read such unhelpful, negative and totally conservative comment."

I like the hon. Gentleman's equation of "negative" and "unhelpful" with "conservative". I have always suspected the hon. Gentleman of being something of a dissident on the Conservative Benches. I assure him that his general practitioner is happy to agree with his phraseology—that the White Paper is negative, unhelpful and conservative.

I notice that the amendment tabled by the Prime Minister and her right hon. Friends

"welcomes the widespread medical support for the objectives of the White Paper".

We must handle that phrase with care. The objectives of the White Paper, as stated in it, are unexceptionable: broadly speaking, it is in favour of patients living longer and against their dying. However, I challenge the Secretary of State—it is the first of a few challenges that I shall issue to him in my speech—to produce the name of a single medical organisation that has welcomed the proposals in the White Paper.

In case the Secretary of State rises to the challenge by responding that the Conservative Medical Society has welcomed the proposals, let me tell him that that particular case is rather suspect, as there is some doubt about whether it carried out the ballot of its members before announcing its decision.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman has specifically mentioned medical organisations. Is that so that he can leave out the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales, which welcomed the report, or does he consider it rather inconsequential to take into account the views of those who actually run the Health Service?

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Gentleman reads the comments of the National Association of Health Authorities, he will find that they are much more carefully balanced than he has suggested. It is, however, hardly surprising that members of health authorities have welcomed the

[Mr. Cook]

Government's proposals, as the Government have spent the past 10 years stuffing those health authorities with their placemen and placewomen.

The Secretary of State's response to this overwhelming opposition is to insist that none of it will stop him. As he said in a lecture to the Royal College of Nursing, these changes will happen whether we like them or not, and whatever we say. It may surprise hon. Members, given the defiant ring of that statement, to learn that we are at present in a consultative period. The extent to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman is willing to enter into a dialogue with doctors during that consultative period was discovered by doctors in the Vale of Glamorgan last week, when he pushed his way through them, leaving behind the sole intelligible question on which he had consulted them: "Where is my car?"

In this alleged consultation, the Secretary of State is displaying an arrogance which sits uncomfortably with his supposed role as an accountable Minister in a democratic country. In a week in which we ruefully reflect on what 10 years of the present Prime Minister have meant for the nation, I warn the Secretary of State that the nation is heartily sick of this style of hectoring, opinionated government.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does it really come as any surprise to the hon. Gentleman that the general practitioners oppose the White Paper? After all, has he found many barristers in favour of the Lord Chancellor's proposals, or many scheme dockers who favour the abolition of the dock labour scheme?

Mr. Cook: The odd thing is that I remember that, on 31 January, the Secretary of State, when unveiling the £1 million package to communicate to doctors and to medical opinion how useful and wonderful his proposals were, said nothing about doctors being against the proposals or that he expected general practitioners to be against them. On the contrary, everything said at the time to defend the £1 million expenditure was about how important it was to communicate these ideas so that people employed in the Health Service could understand and agree with them. The people involved certainly understood, but whether or not they agreed with the proposals is an entirely different matter.

Since this point has been raised, I can say to the Secretary of State that, as a result of one of his six consultations with the West Middlesex hospital, on the night of his presentation of 31 January we were able to recruit seven people to the Labour party who applied on the spot for membership.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is the hon. Gentleman able to cite a single instance of any reform suggested by any Government to the National Health Service, from its inception 40 years ago, to which the doctors have had no objection?

Mr. Cook: It is perfectly true that a number of concerned doctors in 1948 opposed the setting up of the NHS, as did the Conservative party at that time. However, it is certainly not the case that doctors are opposed to all changes in the Health Service.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I have given way generously to hon. Gentlemen and the hon. Lady, but, as I am conscious that this is a three-hour debate and that other hon. Members will wish to speak, I must decline to give way on this occasion.

To comprehend the bitterness of general practitioners, it is necessary to understand how they have been deceived by this Government. For a year, the representatives of general practitioners have been negotiating on the practitioners' contract. In the course of that year, the representatives were repeatedly assured that nothing in the White Paper would affect general practitioners and their contract. That assurance was repeated at a meeting on 21 December last year.

General practitioners first heard that the assurance was inoperative on 18 January, when the Department of Health cancelled the February meeting of the negotiators in order to give general practitioners time to consider how the White Paper would affect the practitioners' contract. A fortnight later they received the White Paper, which contained two major departures. First, it has thrown into reverse the drive by successive Governments to encourage general practitioners to take fewer patients on their list. Instead, the new contract proposes to increase the per capita element by a third, rewarding those general practitioners who hoard patients and penalising those who want to keep the list to a number to whom they can give individual attention.

That departure will have an impact on general practitioners and an even bigger impact on their patients. More patients on every list means less time for each patient. It is purely double-speak for the Secretary of State to describe this measure as encouraging general practitioners to take on more patients in order to improve the quality of service to each patient.

The second major change that general practitioners discovered on reading the White Paper was that the Secretary of State proposes to entice GPs in larger practices into practice budgets. The essential problem with practice budgets is that they will result in a conflict of interest. When GPs see a patient now, they have to ask themselves only what treatment the patient needs. In future, with a practice budget, they will have to ask themselves a second question: what treatment can the practice afford? It is because of that conflict of interest that there will be a suspicion in the mind of the patient that he or she is not being recommended for the best treatment. It will destroy the trust of the patient in his or her doctor. As one doctor expressed it graphically, when a patient looks into the eyes of his or her GP, the patient wants to see reflected in those eyes his own anguish, not the calculations of an accountant.

Another major proposal in the White Paper which has also caused concern to doctors is that hospitals should opt out of——

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The hon. Gentleman implies that the White Paper was an act of bad faith over the negotiations on the contract, because we introduced two changes. Will he pause in his reading of his Tavistock house brief to explain that an increase in the capitation element of the contract was floated in the White Paper on primary health care 18 months earlier? That was nothing new. Furthermore, GP practice budgets have nothing to do with the negotiation of the GP contract. On what grounds does the hon.

Gentleman support the BMA's assertion, which it appears to have given him, that the White Paper interrupted the 12 months of negotiations on the GP contract?

Mr. Cook: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being characteristically offensive by suggesting that I have come to the House armed with a brief from Tavistock house or anywhere else. I do not claim for myself much credit, but I claim for myself the credit of preparing my own speeches; they are not prepared for me. I take issue with the tone of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question and the abuse with which it was accompanied. If he wishes to make more rapid progress, the House should be treated as a place for open debate, not as a place for abuse.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked two questions. I shall respond first to his second question. He cannot claim that the practice budget proposal does not have a bearing on the GP contract. Such an argument is Jesuitical. His claim that it was foreshadowed 18 months ago in the White Paper will not stand up to examination. The Government said in that White Paper that they intended to increase the capitation proportion from 47 per cent. to 50 per cent. The January White Paper said that the Government intended to increase the proportion from 47 per cent. to 60 per cent. There is a big difference between the two figures.

The other major proposal in the White Paper that is causing concern to doctors is that hospitals should opt out of local authority control, that they should be free standing, that they should not be accountable to the local health authority, that no local council members should be able to serve on the governing body and ask difficult questions and that their only obligation should be to make ends meet by marketing their services. As the joint consultants committee observed:

"These proposals inevitably change the prime aim of the management of these hospitals from the provision of adequate care to the community as a whole to the financial success of the hospital."

What will it mean when hospitals have to change their prime management aim from the provision of care to the community to the financial success of the hospital? The long-term consequences of that financial pressure have been obligingly spelt out by the director of the private Lister hospital. He has asked what lessons can be learned from his experience of running a private hospital by those hospitals that choose to opt out. Helpfully having asked that question, he then provides the answers. In his article he writes:

"The opt-out hospital will need to make firm decisions as to which services to promote and which are uncompetitive. Some specialties may have to go. The problem of unsuccessful specialties will be a real one. For how long could one carry a loss-making specialty including its medical team?"

I invite the House to note the revealing way in which the director of the Lister hospital defines an unsuccessful specialty. An unsuccessful specialty is not one which offers poor quality of care or care that patients do not need in the community; an unsuccessful specialty is a loss-making specialty. That is the reality of what will happen with the opt-out hospitals. Care will be defined according to which specialty can provide the most generous mark-up on the treatment, not the care that is most needed by the community.

What happens to hospitals if they fail to move with the times and persist in offering loss-making specialties? The disaster of the Lister hospital has a neat phrase: they will be "shaken out of the market". Not closed, mark you, but shaken out of the market. It is a pity that the director of the Lister hospital has not been working for the Department of Health for the last 10 years; otherwise, we could have learnt that the 300 hospitals closed under this Government were not closed but shaken out of the market and the 20,000 beds we have lost in the last 10 years were not cut, but shaken out of the market. Also shaken out of the market, of course, is any commitment to the National Heath Service as a public service to every community in which there is a district general hospital providing ready access to a comprehensive range of medical services.

The right hon. Gentleman is not just nurturing a threat to the Health Service: what he is proposing is an affront to our democracy. He has sent an instruction to every regional health authority to provide by next Monday a list of volunteer hospitals for opt-out. They in turn are instructing unit general managers to volunteer for opt-out. I do not doubt that by Monday the right hon. Gentleman will have his list of volunteers. What I find thoroughly offensive is what he proposes will happen next, which is that he, and he alone, will then decide whether they opt out. The decision on opt-out will be taken in a smoke-filled room, and most of the smoke will come from the Secretary of State's cigar.

What happened to all the talk of greater local decision-making? What happened to the promises of patient choice? If the Secretary of State is serious about choice in local decision-making, why not give local people the choice of whether their hospital opts out?

I issue my second challenge. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman seriously believes opt-out is so good, let him put it to the vote of the local community. Let it be decided by the local community which that hospital serves and which in many cases was the community which once upon a time paid for the buildings that the Secretary of State proposes to give away.

There is an obvious comparison with the speed with which the Secretary of State is proceeding in his White Paper. His proposals were conceived in haste and are now being imposed with premature haste. Just over a year ago, the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor received the Griffiths report on community care. There has been no progress there, no timetable for consultation, no urgent circulars to regional managers and no promise of legislation in the next Parliament.

I give the Secretary of State my third challenge. His Government owe us a debate on the White Paper in Government time. Having taken so long to find that time, before he comes back to the House to debate this White Paper, let us have his Government's response to the Griffiths report on community care, so we can put it side by side with the White Paper and see what sense they make together. It is almost three years since the National Audit Office observed that, in community care, doing nothing is not an option. That is precisely what the right hon. Gentleman has chosen to do, and we all know why. It is because Sir Roy Griffiths had the bad taste to point out that, if we are serious about developing the health and social services which will enable the elderly and the handicapped to live full and rewarding lives in the community, we must provide extra resources and responsibilities to the local authority which delivers those services to the community.

Labour councils have a clearer understanding than the right hon. and learned Gentleman of what elderly people

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need to keep them in the community and to keep them healthy. Yesterday, I released a league table that ranked local authorities by the number of home helps per thousand elderly people. Only one solitary Conservative council made it into the top 20 councils in that league table. Conversely, not one majority Labour council was to be found in the bottom 20. That is the difference between our parties' understanding of community care.

If Conservative Members consider that observation too partisan, I can offer them an observation with which they will agree. The record of the Democrats is even worse than theirs. Out of seven councils under Democratic administration, a clear majority are in the bottom 20 of that league table. That record shows that the Labour party understands the changing direction which health and social services need to meet the challenge of the rapid growth in very elderly people. Instead, the White Paper offers us the fatuous irrelevance of tax relief on private medical cover for the elderly.

We need to integrate the hospital and primary care services to get into the communities the diagnostic skills we keep locked up in our hospitals. Instead, the White Paper proposes that those hospitals will opt out and that consultants will meet GPs mainly to price a contract. We need to change the Health Service from a rescue service into a service that promotes health and prevents ill health. The White Paper contains not a single proposal for health promotion. It is full of measures that will cost treating illness but puts no price on health. I have outlined the basis of Labour's programme for health, which we shall be publishing this month at a launch cost rather less than the £1·5 million that the right hon. and learned Gentleman spent on the White Paper.

The fundamental difference between our proposals and the Secretary of State's White Paper is that our proposals will rest on our commitment to a Health Service in which resources are allocated by medical and social need and are not marketed by commercial demand.

I conclude with my final challenge to the Secretary of State. I noted that the Minister of State observed that the Government have been elected to govern and will not shirk the task of government. No one can deny that the Government have been elected to govern, but no one, not even the Government, can claim that they were elected to carry out such changes to the NHS. Where in the last Conservative manifesto were those proposals spelt out to the electorate? Where in the last manifesto were the electorate warned that hospitals would be encouraged to opt out and GPs encouraged to volunteer for cash limits? My final challenge to the Secretary of State is this: if he is so convinced that his proposals are right for the nation, that they will produce a better Health Service and more choice for patients, let us put it to the test of electoral opinion and find out whether Conservative Members are elected to govern while chained to those policies. If he puts it to the electorate, I assure the Secretary of State of our full co-operation in spelling it out to the electorate so that they thoroughly understand what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is proposing. In the meantime, I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman, as it is our right to ask in this democratic Chamber, to put off legislation on these drastic changes until we have put them to an electoral contest.

I do not doubt that the Secretary of State will win the vote tonight. He has already lost the public debate. He came to office with no mandate for such changes. Since taking office, he has been unable to win any support for them. If he persists in abusing his majority in Parliament to push them through, he will not only destroy the trust between patients and doctors; he will undermine the faith of those patients in this place as a democratic institution.

4.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes the widespread medical support for the objectives of the White Paper "Working for Patients" and believes that the proposals in that White Paper will enable the health service and individual doctors to respond better to the needs and wishes of patients, extend patient choice, delegate responsibility to where the services are provided and secure the best value for money; affirms its support for the basic principles of the National Health Service which will be strengthened by the early implementation of the White Paper proposals; and looks forward to the constructive contributions from medical organisations to achieve that."

By a curious turn of events, this is the first debate on the National Health Service in which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I have taken part since I came to my present office last July, with the exception of some exchanges on the dental and optical charges, which he will recall. We are shortly to have a debate in Government time on the White Paper reforms, so we are about to make up for that and to discuss Health Service matters at considerable length.

The Opposition have chosen to found their motion on the subject of the doctors' opposition to the National Health Service reforms. I shall concentrate on that and save many of my remarks for the debate on the White Paper. I want to talk about the points raised by doctors, some against and some in favour of the White Paper. I shall explain the present position to the House and examine the sudden, new relationship between the Labour party and the doctors. I do not believe that the opposition of the two groups to the reforms is based on the same premises. The Labour party's sudden discovery of the doctors' position is nothing other than political opportunism, because it sees a dispute apparently breaking out.

The House should begin the debate on the basis that the best members of the medical profession are interested in the Health Service above all from the point of view of their own patients. One of the tests that the best members of the medical profession will apply, just as the public outside will, is what the overall impact of the reforms will be on the way in which the Health Service delivers care to patients. When one examines the highly complex proposals which I and the Government have put forward, one has to try to form a picture of the effect on the Health Service in four or five years' time—or more—and how patients will appreciate what the reforms have done to improve the service for them. The one simple aim of the Government is that the National Health Service should be made a better Health Service from the point of view of patients and their families. That is the yardstick that should be applied to each proposal that the Government are putting forward.

We have a long way to go before the reforms come fully into effect, but in a few years' time, when patients look back on the battles over the review, they will see that the

principles of the Health Service remain intact, that the service remains free and financed by the taxpayer and that it is delivered according to medical priority and need. But they will find that many other changes have taken place in a Health Service run in a more business-like and efficient way, because it will be run in a more consumer-conscious way as well. The Health Service will be keeping up to date.

Patients tend to approach the Health Service firstly through the agency of general practice and most of us look, for ourselves and our families, to our GP as our continual health adviser and as our guide to the rest of the system. From now on, patients will be freer to decide which practice they wish to join and they will be able to make that choice on the basis of much better information. At present, people choose their GP—with whom, I accept, they are usually fully satisfied—on the basis of word of mouth recommendations from neighbours. Many of us do not have much experience of what general practice is like outside the practices that we have experienced ourselves. In future, practices will produce information leaflets. Thanks to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, practices will be able to advertise if they wish and will put before patients and would-be patients the services offered to families, the opening times of the surgery and any other particular features.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment when I have given some more examples of what patients will find coming out of the reforms. Patients will probably choose the practices that offer high standards and new services, which we are encouraging by the new contract I intend to negotiate with the British Medical Association. I shall return to the subject of the contract negotiations in a moment.

The hon. Member for Livingston said that nothing in our proposals dealt with the promotion of health and the prevention of disease which, as he rightly said, have to be part of the policy for the future of the Health Service. The new contract proposals, which we have been discussing with the BMA for so long, are founded heavily on just such principles. In four or five years' time, patients will expect to receive from their practices regular health checks, offered to all patients if they so wish, and especially better and more regular contact with older patients over the age of 75. There will also be regular surveillance by GPs of children under the age of five. Under our proposals, there should also be high levels of immunisation against disease for children and screening of female cancers. Those are some of the aims that we have set out.

There will also be more personal visits by doctors from the practice that the patient joins instead of excessive use of a deputising service out of hours. As a result of our wider reforms, when a patient visits a GP he will be given better information than now about where the waiting times are longest in his locality and about the medical quality of the service being provided by the hospital.

Whether or not a GP has a practice budget, he will have more contact with and more influence over the developments of the hospital and community services in his area because he will be in contact with his district health authority. General practitioners are not in contact now with their DHAs about referral patterns. In future how the DHAs use their money to place contracts with hospitals will reflect the referral practices of the local GPs. We are bringing GPs and DHAs together to collaborate.

If a patient has a GP with his own practice budget, the patient will be attending the practice of a general practitioner who has access to taxpayers' money on a scale not known before to doctors, which will mean that the doctor can take into account the quality of care, waiting times, and the preference of the patient when determining how health authority money is used in that area.

Those are big changes in general practice, and when patients evaluate those improvements we shall have a more considered view of our proposals——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose——*

Mr. Clarke: I turn now to the hospital and community services. Patients will find that management of all hospitals will be delegated much more to the local people, to the doctors, the nurses and managers in the hospital itself—that is, to people who are closer to patient care than the people in the hierarchy of bureaucracy that we have now. Those people will decide on the use of resources, the management of the hospital and on the development of the service in their town.

Units will have resources coming in with the patient to match the work that they are doing. They will receive money in response to the demands made by the district health authorities and the GPs, who will refer patients and provide the necessary funds using their budgets. The system of encouraging hospitals to attract resources to their areas of strength will tend to bring the quality of all services up to the level of the best. Competition between them will bring down waiting times as well as raising the quality of the outturn from different specialists.

When we have finished our reforms, all hospitals will strive to please GPs and patients with the other things that they should all have now, such as reliable appointment systems, clear and sensitive explanations to patients of what is happening to them and of what is going to happen, and a whole range of optional extras and amenities available to patients who want to pay for them.

That is what the patient will appreciate. I do not believe that the Labour party will be wholly content, looking back, to realise that, because of what seemed a monetary political advantage, it has placed itself in a position whereby it opposes the development of general practice, the giving of more local autonomy to hospital and community services and the opportunity of making a better Health Service for patients.

Mr. Battle *rose——*

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) *rose——*

Mr. Clarke: I give way to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

Mr. Battle: How does the Secretary of State square all that he has just said with the push in the opposite direction from the Treasury, which is offering tax incentives to elderly people to move out of the National Health Service and in the direction of private practice? Is such a move the Secretary of State's real intention?

Mr. Clarke: Last year we obtained from the Treasury an extra £2,000 million for the services and an extra £1,000 million or thereabouts for the nurses' grading. We ended

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the autumn settlement last year with spending plans 5 per cent. above inflation. Under this Government spending on the National Health Service is now second in the league of spending on public departments. We now spend more on the NHS than we do on the Ministry of Defence. It is obvious that spending on the Health Service will increase rapidly, but to say that spending more money is, in itself, a form of health care policy and that we should ignore inefficiences and the need to raise quality or to make the service more responsive is not an adequate policy, whether it be the policy of the Opposition or of any part of the medical profession. Anything that induces people who want to spend their own money in retirement to provide for some of their health care, such as for elective surgery, thereby reducing pressure on the Health Service, does no harm to the Health Service but enables us to make better use of the money that we obtain.

The Opposition's motion is about doctors. I have dealt with the benefits to patients, and there will be great benefit to doctors as well. It is all very well to say that there is no support from any organisation representing doctors. There are not all that many organisations representing doctors. What tends to happen is that there are endless sub-committees of the same organisation which keep doing the same thing.

I was at a BMA meeting at Tavistock house this morning. It was a meeting of the general manager branch, but all the participants were doctors, and the majority of those asking questions were in favour of these reforms.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The right and learned Gentleman appointed them all.

Mr. Clarke: I did not appoint a solitary one. The hon. Gentleman was, in his time, an extremely effective spokesman on health matters but he has forgotten that the general managers of health authorities are appointed by district health authorities. The unit managers, who were about two thirds of those present this morning, are also appointed by the district health authority and I do not have the gift of a solitary general management post at my disposal.

As I say, they are in favour of benefits for patients above all, but there are benefits for doctors, too.

Mr. Dobson: Is it not true that all these apparently independent general managers/doctors to whom the right and learned Gentleman talked today are on three-year contracts and notes are taken by officials in that Box as to who does or does not collaborate?

Mr. Clarke: This Opposition motion talks about members of the Government traducing the motives of those who disagree with them. That is something, I strongly argue, that I have not done, and nor has my right hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman referred to the opinion of the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales, which is in favour of our proposals, and immediately insisted that it is a collection of placemen. An awful lot of card-carrying members of the Labour party in that association will be very surprised to hear that. I cite to the hon. Member that I have attended a meeting this morning organised by the BMA to discuss with a number of doctors their reaction to the White Paper and that most of them were in favour, and many of them strongly in favour, of the broad principles of the White Paper and he says that they are all on three-year contracts.

The Opposition are deaf except to what they regard as the short-term political opportunity to join in a row which they do not wholly understand.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in the autumn of last year my local hospital closed a ward because the surgeons operating therein were working so effectively and quickly that, in their attempt to reduce their waiting list, they overstepped their budget within about three months? That is an absurdity and they are very much in favour of changing the system to make it impossible for it to happen again.

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. That is one of the principal benefits from what we are proposing that doctors immediately appreciated. At the moment, there is what is sometimes called the efficiency trap, where a hospital is so much in demand and organises itself so well that it increases its work load but, because we only distribute the money by formula, it is told to stop. Indeed, I think they are gilding the lily somewhat, but only recently some Birmingham consultants claimed that they were told to go and play golf rather than carry on doing their work.

I have not met for some weeks now a member of the medical profession who does not think that it is an improvement to provide that, when patients are attracted from district health authorities or general practitioners, the resources will go with them, and that that is a much more sensible way of proceeding.

Doctors also see other advantages. The point of the general practitioners' contract, which I trust we can settle, is that those who work hardest, introduce new services and reach good standards will be rewarded best. Many GPs think that aim is wholly desirable. Indeed, the BMA does not differ from me in my aims for the contract. Those GPs with practice budgets will, as I have already said, have much greater influence over where NHS funds can be used for the benefit of their patients. For doctors in hospital and community services there will be relief from the absurd situation that tends to hit the best—the situation which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) described.

They will also find that more responsibility has been delegated to their hospitals. As clinicians, they will be more involved, they will have more influence over management decisions and they will carry more responsibility for the decisions. I find everywhere that doctors welcome the introduction of what I would regard, as a layman, as quality control and what the doctors call medical audit, whereby they can systematically ensure that standards are properly set for the service and are monitored so that the medical standards remain extremely high.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall carry on giving way steadily, but, as this is a short debate, I apologise that I cannot give way to all.

Given my description of the aim of the reforms and my belief in their benefits, it is surprising that the present bitter controversy has arisen between the Government and, on

the one hand, the Labour party—and, to some extent the centre parties as well—and, on the other, the British Medical opposition—British Medical Association—*[Interruption.]* That is certainly my most Freudian slip of the tongue so far. Although they are both in opposition, there are a limited number of similarities between the Labour party and the BMA. One thing they have in common is that both of them denounced the proposals and began to campaign against them before they were even published. Returning to the letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) that was quoted by the hon. Member for Livingston, it appears that both the Labour party and the BMA can be described as conservative with a small "c". Their reaction to change of all kinds is remarkably similar. However, they are not natural allies. I have found in discussions with them that they come to such a person as myself with the precise nature of their complaints from opposite ends of the political and every other spectrum.

It is not surprising to find that the Labour party and the BMA do not always agree. They never have before. In response to an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), the hon. Member for Livingston implied that nowadays the BMA's views determined, Labour party policy. No doubt, the Bar Council will determine its policy on law reform, just as the Transport and General Workers Union will determine its policy on the dock labour scheme. It was never thus for the doctors. The BMA was nine to one against the foundation of the National Health Service. Aneurin Bevan did not follow the line of the hon. Member for Livingston.

In the mid-1970s, the disputes between the Labour Government and the BMA and the medical profession over private practice were described by a recent historian of the Health Service as being the most bitter in the entire history of the National Health Service. When Barbara Castle was opposed by all the medical organisations, I do not remember the Labour party saying that that settled the argument. It would not. Obviously, the Labour party's arguments do not now coincide with those of the doctors' organisations, and this unholy alliance will not hold together for too long.

So far the Labour party's campaign has been far less important to me and the public than that conducted by the BMA. The issue of so-called privatisation chosen by the hon. Member for Livingston has been a kind of barmy irrelevance to the actual issues to which the Labour party pledged itself. I believe that it is still pledging itself in by-elections to fight the privatisation of the National Health Service. That reminds me of an old story, which I will not relate at length, about the man in the railway compartment who had a device for keeping away elephants. He was sure it worked because no elephants got into his compartment. The Labour party is campaigning against the privatisation of the National Health Service. It will succeed. It is a noble campaign. It will sail on and meet no obstacles, because nobody has ever proposed privatising the Health Service. It is not threatened with privatisation. It is an irrelevant non-issue.

The campaign of the BMA—the doctors' campaign—to which the motion refers has been quite different. The hottest issue is obviously the question of the GPs' contract, coupled to some extent with the indicative drug budgets that we have described. The occasion of the debate is the present heat in relationships between the Government and parts of the BMA. It provoked the GPs' leaflet campaign and it was the subject of last week's conference of local medical committees, which I am glad to say finally brought to an end all talk of a resignation from the Health Service—which struck me as an odd way to show one's commitment to the service—but still talked of sanctions, and of using non-co-operation with our reforms to improve the Health Service unless they had the sort of contract of remuneration that they wanted. I do not believe that that is the view of every doctor.

It is important to sort out the GP contract. We have a debate on the White Paper coming up shortly, but the contract is the immediate issue. I believe that getting a better GP contract will have more effect on raising the quality of health care in this country than most of the other things we have attempted to do in the Health Service for a long time. That contract has been in the air for a long time, and it was clearly trailed in the primary health care Green Paper and subsequent White Paper. We have had long discussions about it.

I do not believe that anyone can be opposed to the idea of having a contract that is up to date and linked to hard work and good performance. We will pay more to the most hard-working GPs and we will set standards of service to patients for all our GPs. The policy of the contract is to build on the strength of British general practice and it is no threat to or attack on it.

Today, GPs, to whom I and the House are seeking to appeal, are better trained than their predecessors because general practice is now recognised as a specialty in its own right. There are more GPs than ever before—up from about 25,000 to about 30,000 during the lifetime of this Government. They have fewer patients each to look after than ever before, with average list sizes falling from 2,286 to 2,020 in England over the last 10 years, on average, a drop of 12 per cent. And they are better paid than ever before. This year's review body increase of 8 per cent. was the highest of any review body group and took their earnings increase 25 per cent. ahead of inflation since 1979.

I think that GPs should be paid well and my proposals are no threat to their average earnings—a suspicion to which I addressed myself forcefully only a few weeks ago. The total payment to GPs currently has been settled by the Government and I approve of it. The total payment out of the contract to the average GP is about £60,000 per annum, including all fees and allowances. The average salary element is set at £31,000, but that average includes part-timers, semi-retired and low-earning GPs. My published new contract proposals show how a GP with an average list could have his earnings potential raised from £43,000 to £47,000.

My proposals would increase the earning figures for the more hard-working GPs and those who hit the targets. I am in favour of paying good GPs very well and I am entitled to say that the incurable suspicion that, somehow, we shall try to reduce those earnings is wrong. What I say to the House and to the doctors—I am sure that the public would agree—is that such earnings are justified for professional men, but they mean that the Government are entitled to specify the work load of doctors, to encourage new services to patients and to set standards of health promotion and disease prevention for which to aim. The contract should pay good rewards and, in return, should set out the high professional standards at which the hard-working professional men and women should aim.

We are not aiming for all GPs to have bigger lists—that is a mathematical impossibility—as the contract is

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capitation-based now. We are aiming for new and better services for elderly patients. That is why one of our offers is to pay so much more to the doctor for each elderly patient that he takes on. The capitation for patients over 75 will go up sharply so long as the doctor maintains contact, at least once a year, with each old person. It is important to explain what we are discussing with the BMA. We aim for better medical supervision of our young people. That is why we are offering a new, generous payment to every doctor who introduces a surveillance system for the under-fives on his or her list.

I hope that we are all agreed that the NHS should keep up with the best international standards of immunisation, which represents disease prevention, and of female cancer screening, which also represents disease prevention. We pay all doctors for whatever immunisation and cervical cancer screening they do as they form part of the essential duties of any doctor nowadays. In my proposals I have suggested extra, new performance payments for those who attain the World Health Organisation target of vaccinating nine out of 10 children on their list. I do not believe that that is unrealistic as about 100 out of 190 district health authorities reached 90 per cent. target for diphtheria, tetanus and polio vaccinations in 1987-88. We are not talking about impossible targets, but we shall discuss the details to ensure that they are possible and reasonable for all subjects.

About 2,000 women are still dying needlessly every year of cervical cancer. That is why I have suggested that new rewards should be given to every GP who persuades eight out of 10 of the at-risk women on his list to have the smear test.

All these details can be discussed. Indeed, they have been discussed, and they can be further discussed. My negotiators and I have spent over 100 hours on matters such as rural practice allowances, basic practice allowances, payments for minor surgery and all the other details of the contract. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who have looked into the GPs' contract will, I hope, now study the Red Book and the mass of material which explains to the GP how to work the contract. I hope that they will also study the magazine *Medeconomics* which appears monthly and which serves no other purpose than to explain to GPs how to get the maximum return out of the contract.

I want to discuss the details yet again so that we can settle the terms of a contract that is up-to-date and rewards the best doctors, because the best doctors are doing this work. We all meet doctors who say, "We are delivering these services" and who will be content so long as the details are reasonable and reflect the realities of practice. We can reach agreement if there is good will, common sense and a commitment on both sides to a better Health Service.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Minister said in relation to cervical smears that women could choose quality clinical medical treatment. How does a woman, when faced with two doctors who are using different publicity, choose which one offers the best quality clinical treatment? There will be great advertising and excellent pictures, but the Minister must explain how a woman in that situation—indeed, the same difficulty will face pensioners—will be in a position to choose the best quality clinical service.

Mr. Clarke: We are here talking about whether doctors carry out cervical smears and whether they carry out a positive drive to advise people of the benefits and so raise the level. If a woman is particularly interested in services for female patients, she might look at the literature to see, for example, whether what is usually called a well woman clinic is being offered by one practice rather than by another, because that is the type of health promotion session that the new contract would encourage.

Having dealt with the contract, I come to the hospital proposals. The concerns of the BMA are different. I by now have met many doctors. Indeed, I could not make up my mind when I last answered parliamentary questions whether I had met hundreds or thousands. Certainly the number must be well into four figures by now. Judging from the campaign that is being run, most hon. Members have met a lot of GPs. I trust that they have also met many consultants and junior doctors.

I believe—I defy anybody to challenge this—that it is clear from discussions with the hospitals that the great bulk of what we now propose is being accepted by hospital doctors, even though some of them still assert that they are against the White Paper as a whole. Most consultants, in my experience, approve of the whole idea of getting better financial management. That represents a transformation in opinion compared with my time as Minister for Health only four or five years ago.

Few consultants would now argue with the contention that it is ridiculous that the Health Service should be one of the last places to get up to date with modern information technology, to come to grips with the world of the computer, or to have any proper financial management system.

We recently extended what we call the resource management initiative to another 50 hospitals, and the 50 that we named had actually competed for the privilege of being put in the forefront of introducing financial management systems.

The profession is now almost wholly in favour of clinical audit. I have not met a doctor for some time who has been against it. That is almost a total reverse of the situation five or six years ago, when the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Surgeons first tentatively began to go into this area. It was invented by the profession and I reassure the profession that it will continue to be professionally led because it is quality control by doctors, of doctors for the benefit of doctors and their patients.

I know few consultants who do not welcome the idea of what is usually described as the concept of money following the patient. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent has given me a perfect example of how doctors are fed up with the present system which does not tie the resources with where the work is done best and to where the patients are being referred. So the question of money going over administrative boundaries and the ending of the efficiency trap are welcomed by all doctors.

Doctors have reservations and questions; that is sensible. The White Paper is not a blueprint. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State says that it is not a tablet of stone. It is not intricately detailed. There is an enormous amount for discussion within it; that is why we

have eight working papers for discussion. The detail needs to be worked out with the service. People in the service want to know about planning. There are fears about a comprehensive service and about whether there will be fragmentation. When we debate the White Paper those fears can be answered. District health authorities will continue to have all the money they need. We are under a duty to provide a comprehensive service accessible to all patients. Health authorities will use their money to make sure that they plan where the service is best given to patients.

The profession wants to know about medical teaching and research, an extremely important and complex issue where the old arrangements needed improving anyway. We have to make sure that the training of our doctors and research are not adversely affected by the proposals. The same is true of nurse training. When I encounter consultants in the hospital service I find that they are suspicious to a certain extent of the new system of contracts. They are sometimes suspicious about the self-governing proposals and about the effect of GP practice budgets. They say that we are going too fast. They talk of the need for pilot schemes. They say that when new drugs are introduced they need to experiment.

All that has been picked up by the hon. Member for Livingston. I do not credit him with originality. In the press at the weekend he picked up a theme that has been put to me by the medical profession for the last month, but in a different way. He is interested in running pilots. I assume that he does not want to run pilots of things to which he is fundamentally opposed. Now he has come round to experimenting. As we need legislation before we can set up any of these things, he does not seem to want to rush to experiment because he does not want to legislate for a year or two. It might mean pilot schemes at two or three selected places and a multidisciplinary committee. We would spend years getting an agreed assessment. In the great tradition of that giant service, nothing would happen for a long time.

Consultants are interested in self-governing hospitals and GPs are interested in their own practice budgets. The hon. Member for Livingston is right to have his fears. Many doctors will react to our request for expressions of interest next month. Many of them will move forward with us. They are interested in how we will handle the changes and whether we are going too fast. I believe that we can meet the fears of plunging into the unknown. It is in the nature of our proposals on self-governing hospitals that we are asking who is interested. We shall work with willing volunteers where there is an adequate expression of interest.

There will be GP practice budgets only when GPs have said, "That is a good idea. You have satisfied me on the details. We have negotiated the basis of a contract that I am happy with." They they will go ahead. Before we have the first ones in place by April 1991 we shall have to work out the details. We shall discover much more about how to calculate a budget, about the structure of management needed in self-governing hospitals, and about care services, even after April 1991, depending on where we are. We shall run it on a fairly loose rein at first to get the system bedded in.

The question is, do Labour Members share the Government's aim for a better health service and improved management, and will they commit themselves to proceeding sensibly and purposefully in the right direction, testing things, working out the details, and making sure that it goes smoothly? Or does the Labour party, as some people did at first, just say that it is "agin" it, that the Government are commercialising the service and that it is fundamentally opposed to it?

I will be fair to the hon. Member for Livingston; he has not done it today, but outside the debate has been reduced to a pathetically low level at various times. I have discussed keeping elephants out of the door by opposing privatisation. People have been told that the elderly will be turned away and that hospitals will concentrate on profitable lines, whatever that means. I went through a picket line in Glamorgan when I was late for a train. A chap ran after me and gave me a leaflet. I was told that I had gone past GPs. I do not know who most of them were. They were chanting, "People, not profits," whatever that meant.

The trouble with that level of campaigning is that, as will become clear when we reach the legislation and as we proceed, the BMA does not believe what is being said. It knows that the leaflets contain things that are not true. More importantly, the Labour party does not believe what is being said. It knows that it is not fighting a campaign for privatisation. The snag is that it has no proposals of its own to put forward. At the moment, it is trying to compound confusion for short-term political reasons.

I do not object to political exchanges, whether vigorous or less vigorous, but I strongly object when the Labour party, the hon. Member for Livingston and others doubt the sincere commitment of myself and the Conservative party to a better NHS. I and many of my hon. Friends have worked for years in stints at the Department of Health in order to secure the future of the NHS, which would decline if we adoped a do-nothing option and decided to let it stand still.

The Government have spent more and done more for the NHS than any other Government in the previous two decades. We have presided over the growth of the service, the widespread introduction of new high-tech services and the particularly rapid spread of community-based care and better services for the elderly. We began the introduction of better modern management and we shall continue that.

The Labour party's claims for its commitment are based on the ancient history of two generations ago. Our claims are based on our recent achievements and, above all, on our vision of reforms which will make the NHS better still for future generations of patients and will give us a Health Service which, as a result of the Government's efforts, we shall be proud of in 40 years' time, just as we have been proud of it over the past 40 years.

4.46 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): When the Secretary of State said at the end of his speech that what he resented was that anybody should question the allegiance of himself and his party to the National Health Service, I say to him right at the start that if he had been present in 1948, as I was, when the service was introduced, he would have known that the Opposition's suspicions were based on a great foundation.

The Conservative party made a great effort to stop the NHS, on its present comprehensive basis, from ever being introduced. That is why it put down reasoned amendments against Second and Third Readings. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said that his party was

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wrong on that occasion—I am happy that he should own up now—but he must not suspect our suspicions when we look back upon that record.

The Secretary of State also referred today—he called it a Freudian slip, but it might be much more of a Freudian landslide—to the British Medical opposition. That is what he is up against, and he must not complain if on some matters the Opposition happen to agree with the British Medical opposition's opposition to his measures.

I hope that this is not too parochial a reference to my constituency, but nothing is resented more in my constituency of Blaenau Gwent, or Ebbw Vale as it was, by the representatives of the medical profession than that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should in some way claim that his quarrels with the British Medical opposition, or the medical professions in their different forms, is in some way comparable to what Aneurin Bevan faced when the service was introduced.

One of the main reasons why doctors, or many sections of the doctors—not all of them by any means—opposed the introduction of the scheme was that they said that it would interfere with their clinical freedom. Large numbers of general practitioners and their leaders in the BMA genuinely believed that right up to the moment when the Health Service was brought into being, as I can confirm. At that moment, the transformation took place and the doctors discovered that they had far more genuine clinical freedom, particularly when dealing with poor people, than ever before. The vast majority of the medical profession welcomed the change as the greatest they had seen in the history of the country. Most of them hold to that same view now.

Therefore, the Secretary of State cannot claim for a moment that his arguments are anything like the same as those that Aneurin Bevan had with the medical profession. At that time it was not easy to get the service comprehensively established, because it had been divided in such different ways. To achieve anything which could properly be termed a National Health Service necessitated detailed consultations with the British Medical Association and other sections.

A few moments ago the Secretary of State spoke as if the medical profession were contained in one body. However, there is a variety of bodies, and if the right hon. and learned Gentleman knew anything about this, he would know that the royal colleges have always taken different approaches. If it had not been for the detailed consultations between Aneurin Bevan and the royal colleges, particularly the leaders of the Royal College of Physicians, there would never have been a National Health Service.

The difference between Aneurin Bevan's Government and this Government is that his did not take orders from the medical profession. Aneurin Bevan always said that supremacy should lie with the House, but he consulted members of the profession. The shape of the National Health Service was powerfully affected by the discussions that he had with the heads of the royal colleges.

The Government have done some terribly foolish things in relation to health. They have done nothing more foolish than slamming the door on the heads of the royal colleges not so many months ago. They did so over the contract but, even worse, they did not consult the colleges about their plans for the future. Why not?

The origin of the troubles that the Government and the country face over the National Health Service, which the Opposition want to protect and for which it has every right to fight, was the Prime Minister's decision to set up a review body—a Cabinet committee—under her chairmanship to investigate the Health Service. No one was stronger than Aneurin Bevan in saying that the service should be reviewed. Almost every Act introduced by the Government in which he served contained a clause stating that the service should be reviewed after five years, or some period, so that the people working in it and the patients dependent on it could take a fresh look at it. He was not dogmatic enough to say that it should stay the same for ever.

Aneurin Bevan would never have agreed to a Cabinet Committee that was presided over by a Prime Minister, even one that favoured the Health Service, which the present one does not. Even if the Prime Minister passionately supported it, it would not be satisfactory for an investigation to be carried out by a Cabinet committee with the Prime Minister able to carry through anything she wanted and to get rid of Cabinet Ministers who did not do as she wanted, almost as easily as if they were health managers.

The Secretary of State is a very clever fellow, although not quite as clever as he sometimes claims. However, I give him full credit for his quality compared to that of many of his comrades and companions in the Cabinet. When he accepted his job, his ambition exceeded his intelligence and he has to live with the consequences. Unfortunately, so do we. Unless we can cut it down, he will suffer to his dying day from the albatross round his neck, which is that he was prepared, in that Cabinet committee, to accept the formal investigation into the most precious of the country's national institutions, accept its terms and recommend them to the country. Even the right hon. and learned Gentleman can hardly stomach some of the terms, such as the special arrangements for BUPA patients, although he defends them.

I suppose that most of the leakages on these subjects come direct from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. The story is that he opposed the proposals right up to the end, but then swallowed his pride. That is the price of keeping his job. He has made his biggest political mistake and, unfortunately, we have to suffer for it.

I am sure that, when he has the chance, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) will carry out a proper overhaul and investigation of the National Health Service. That must take place, and the intelligent way to do so would be to have consultations before decisions are taken, not afterwards. If that had happened, even with these proposals, if they had not been handed down by the Prime Minister, there might have been some chance of decent consultations. However, nobody knows better than the Secretary of State how narrow the ground is for any possible negotiations. That is an affront to everyone who works in the Health Service, whether representatives of trade unions, about whom the right hon. and learned Gentleman is so rude, or representatives of the general practitioners. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is capable of offending GPs about their medical and monetary habits, when he is in a tight corner in negotiations. The presidents of the royal colleges, who

represent some of the greatest traditions in this country, were never once consulted before decisions were made about these major questions on how the service which they did so much to build should operate in the future.

Doctors from my constituency, like many others throughout the country, have been to fake discussions and consultations held by the Secretary of State or by his Ministers, I was affronted by the one that took place on 20 April in Bristol, to which representatives from south Wales went to have discussions with the Secretary of State. After he had made his speech and after a few minutes of discussion, the media were turned out so that other discussions could be held. The Secretary of State did not allow the opportunity for other views to be put to him and many of those who went to the meeting went away affronted by the manner in which matters were discussed and debated, quite apart from their reactions to the proposals.

If the Secretary of State questions what I say, I can give him detailed evidence. I shall not go through every aspect of the objections, but I shall mention those relating to the major matters to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred. One of the leading doctors in my constituency went to the consultation meeting. It was the first chance that he and his representatives had had to speak about the proposal, which is now supposed to go through. I shall mention one of his objections from a list of almost equally valid objections: his criticism of the way in which the Government presented their proposals.

When the Secretary of State gets into such a ferocious rhetorical state about the propaganda spread by the BMA, he should be more careful, because he must be spending hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on putting his case. The BMA, for probably the first time in history, is using an advertising agent to assist it in putting its case. I dare say the Government will soon introduce a law under which only Government Ministers will be allowed to use advertising agencies to present their case. I dare say that Lord Young, who often co-operated eagerly with the right hon. and learned Gentleman, would be happy to draw up a suitable piece of legislation that could be rushed through to ensure that only the Government have the chance to put their case, and if any other group tried to hit back it would be pilloried and attacked, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has done so offensively on other occasions.

Doctors in my constituency, and I am sure many others, are asking something that goes to the central principle of the Health Service. The right and learned Gentleman's arguments about the numbers involved in the work in the years ahead will not affect this argument. The doctor said:

"I think it is morally wrong to claim that the Service will be free at the point of first contact when some GPs will in effect be controlling waiting lists. It would have been more honest for Government to have encouraged these Practices to present private services altogether rather than continue the pretence of the scheme representing NHS principles."

Believe me, after the tuition of 30 or 40 years, doctors in my constituency—and, I would say, in most other parts of the country—understand the principles of the NHS very much better than the Prime Minister who presided over the committee that produced these proposals. The right hon. Lady has never understood those principles. Her idea is to kill Socialism, and I am sure that right up to 1979—or 1983, or perhaps 1987—she regarded the NHS as part of Socialism. It would be strange if she did not, because the NHS is the greatest and most obvious Socialist institution in the country and is based on Socialist principles. The Prime Minister cannot kill Socialism without killing off the National Health Service.

Of course, it would be very difficult to kill it off with a single blow or indeed a series of blows, even with such a skilful practitioner as the Secretary of State to do the Prime Minister's dirty work for her. The Government must go about it in a rather different way. I do not respect the good faith of the Secretary of State in these matters, but I know that some Conservative Members, and many doctors who are certainly not Labour party supporters, support the NHS and believe that its principles must be upheld over and above any competing principles about private profit, the market and so forth. That is what I mean by believing in the Health Service.

Many inroads have been made into the NHS as it was first introduced in 1948, and I acknowledge that they have been made by Labour as well as Conservative Governments; but we are now witnessing a much more serious, dangerous and long-term attack on the NHS than we have ever seen before. In case anyone doubts what I say or thinks that I am overstating this aspect of our deep-seated suspicions about the Government's motives, let me quote what was said by the medical correspondent of *The Independent* a day or two after the publication of the Secretary of State's proposals:

"In the week since the NHS White Paper was published, the most revealing comment about it has been an aside from David Willetts, formerly the Prime Minister's health care adviser in the Downing Street policy unit and now director of the Centre for Policy Studies, the right-wing think-tank Mrs. Thatcher helped to found."

No doubt the Secretary of State is familiar with those bodies: indeed, he may be familiar with David Willetts himself.

"Mr. Willetts, the closest of the 'outsiders' to the NHS review, said he had asked a senior civil servant what he would do to the NHS if he were the minister. The reply was, 'I'd either leave it entirely alone, because it is too politically dangerous. Or I'd destabilise it, and see what happened.'"

That is what the right hon. and learned Gentleman is doing with the backing of the Prime Minister, and that is why we believe that this attack will shape many other aspects of social policy in the years to come.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston has led the battle with such skill, knowledge, understanding and hard work that we will accept no insults that may be levelled at him by the Secretary of State. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will wish to withdraw the few extra insults that he threw out today. My hon. Friend has led the battle to protect the service with constructive zeal, and we are still determined to protect it. We know that it needs much more money to be made better for the future; but, although that is by far the most important aspect, there are many others.

The improvement of the NHS must be achieved by a Government who believe in the democratic Socialist principles of the service. The Prime Minister does not believe in them, and if the Secretary of State says that he does he will not stay in his job for long. We would find reasons to rejoice at that, and others not to do so.

My hon. Friend has made a generous proposal to the Government. If it were merely a matter of political opportunism—those are the Secretary of State's words, not mine—the best thing for the Labour party would be for the fight to go ahead until we could play it as one of our main cards in the next election. My hon. Friend, on behalf

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of the Labour party, has proposed that the issue be kicked out until after the next election: that we should have a vote about it. That is a fair offer, and if it is rejected that rejection will expose all the more the malice—the malignity—that the Prime Minister and her aides have brought to this great subject.

5.5 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I shall not detain the House for long. I wish to make three points.

I wish first to comment on the disreputable £7 million advertising campaign being run by the British Medical Association. Like many of my hon. Friends, I actually enjoy receiving letters from constituents, but I have been horrified by the number of letters that I have received from elderly patients, many of them in old people's homes, who have been worried stiff by the BMA's untruthful pamphlet. They have been led to believe that they will not obtain the treatment or—if it is near the end of the financial year—the drugs that they need. The BMA knows perfectly well that both those things are untrue.

Even worse, one 84-year-old was informed by his doctor that if the Government's proposals went through he would no longer be able to visit him at home in an isolated rural area. I should dearly like to know the name of his doctor. Despite all that, however, I continue to believe that locally we are very fortunate in our GPs, and that they have merely been misled by the BMA and are supporting what is, after all, their trade union.

I have responded meticulously, point by point, to every point that a doctor has made to me. I assured doctors that this was a consultative document and that I would forward all their letters and comments to the Secretary of State as part of the consultation process, which I have done. I said that I would seek answers to points which were unclear or which worried them, with a view to having them modified—as usually happens during a consultation period—or deleted altogether, as the case might be.

That was until Thursday. On Thursday I received a letter from a local GP. The final paragraph read as follows:

"Some doctors select the compliant patients by being so unpleasant that the others leave the list, and join the list of a softer doctor."

Those are not my words; they are the words of a local GP. That letter came as a considerable shock to me, because I have always viewed our local doctors—delightful men—through rose-coloured spectacles, and have argued that what the Government were trying to do was bring other areas up to the standard of those in my part of the world.

No doubt the unpleasant doctors mentioned by their colleague are not typical, but even one such doctor is one too many, and shows that reform is necessary for the patients' sake. Fortunately for the excellent reputations of our local hospitals and the vast majority of our local GPs, on the very day that I received that disturbing letter the North-West regional health authority issued a report by its top medical experts showing that the expectation of life in Lancashire and Greater Manchester was two years below the national average—except in Lancaster, where it is above the national average. That rather proves the point that I was making all along to doctors and constituents alike—that the NHS is patchy and uneven. When the BMA and the Royal College of Nursing talk of destroying the comprehensive nature of the NHS, they are talking of a myth. The aim of the Government is to make sure that a comprehensive service, nationally funded, exists everywhere, and that people obtain decent treatment wherever they live.

It is said that things go in threes. On Thursday the BMA held its conference to decide its attitude to the proposals. As one GP representative put it, the BMA attitude is hardening. Really? When did the BMA not oppose change? It opposed it when Lloyd George tried to reform health care in 1911; it opposed the White Paper in 1943; it opposed the introduction of the NHS in 1946-48 until—as the predecessor of the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), Aneurin Bevan, put it—its mouth was stuffed with gold; and it opposed the changes in the contract in 1966, changes it is now defending tooth and nail.

I have news for the BMA delegate to whom I have referred: if the BMA attitude is hardening, so is the attitude of myself and my hon. Friends, with every letter that we receive from sick and elderly constituents, people who are frightened, misled and confused by the BMA pamphlets. We do not expect that sort of unprofessional conduct from the delightful and courteous men whom, until now, we have liked and respected. If there be any will to resume the protracted negotiations on conditions of service, all very well. If not, so be it. I advise the Secretary of State to press on with his reforms. The patients need them, and we shall support them.

5.14 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I believe that the official Opposition's motion left the Labour party wide open to exactly the kind of counter attack launched by the Secretary of State. It is wrong headed at this stage to concentrate simply on the terms of the general practitioners' contract and doctors' opposition. Such a move allows the Government to argue that the doctors are just another special interest group and that they are only concerned about their own wallets. Such an approach diminishes the importance of all the other professional and consumer groups, legion in number, who oppose the Government's proposals.

The range of dissent and the depth of feeling of opposition to the White Paper argue powerfully for the widespread mobilisation of public opinion against these proposals. The motion tabled by the Labour party has potentially minimised the opposition of Conservative Back Benchers and the possibility of getting a response from them to the position in which they find themselves. I get the impression that they are under a lot of pressure from their constituents. Therefore, I believe that an Adjournment motion would have produced a much more instructive and constructive debate.

The Secretary of State announced that a full debate will be held on the White Paper. It would be helpful to know when that might happen. It will be an important debate in Government time, and I look forward to it being held.

The Government's proposals relating to the NHS are ill thought out. No firm long-term commitment has been made to increase funding year by year. I understood the Secretary of State to say that he had won a 5 per cent. real increase at the battle with the Treasury last autumn. If that is correct and if the Secretary of State is saying that, over time, the Health Service can expect that sort of real terms

increase in funding under his custodianship, many of the generally held fears will be assuaged. Of course, there is always the question whether Government statements can be trusted.

The very effective speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) underscored the fact that part of the problem has really arisen because of a lack of consultation. The Government engaged in an internal review. There was no consultation or empirical research. No evidence was submitted and studied. That situation weakens fundamentally the strength of the case that the Government are trying to argue.

The Secretary of State cannot so readily rubbish the idea of pilot projects. In the autumn, there will be a report on the resources management initiatives that have been in process. Why do we not wait at least until we have the preliminary findings, although even then it may take some further time to establish exactly what has been achieved in those projects? I am aware that another 50 or so are due to commence and they will also take further time to assess. There is no reason for this degree of haste; the pilot projects should first of all be studied carefully, before decisions are made. The time allowed to introduce the plans is totally inadequate, and is a recipe for confusion and disaster. There is no guarantee of resources even to manage the introduction of the reforms—a substantial problem which the service will have to face. In the present situation there is considerable uncertainty and confusion. The response of the Secretary of State is simply to try to bully people into line. That is not a proper or responsible way to behave. The only major effect achieved is to lower morale of staff when they are trying their best to deliver the best service they can.

The proposals in the White Paper are undoubtedly fundamental and far reaching, irrespective of whether one thinks they are right or wrong. Given their importance, the changes should have been introduced much more carefully and thoughtfully. I believe that the debate should really be about the future of primary health care. The Government seem motivated by a desire to create a mechanism that will limit costs. I have a fear, and it is essentially the same fear as that which GPs raised when the NHS was first introduced. They fear now as they did then that limitations on cost will restrict clinical judgment. GPs are right to be afraid, because, given the lack of detail in front of us, that limitation is still a real prospect.

An inevitable result of the present proposals would be doctors spending less time with patients. I cannot see how the Secretary of State can argue otherwise. Less time would be spent on meaningful preventive medicine. I listened carefuly to the Secretary of State's comments about Government targets, statistics and so on. However, meaningful preventive medicine depends on the general practitioner spending sufficient time with individual patients to deal with their requirements. As a result of the Government's proposals, there is certainly a prospect of a fundamental erosion of services provided in rural areas. The Secretary of State has not satisfied the profession that such services would not be eroded.

As a Scottish Member, I realise that some improvements have been made in the Scottish contract. I hope that, as far as possible, those improvements will be made in the English contract, built upon and taken forward. However, in general, doctors are still apprehensive that they are being asked to take a fundamental structural step in an unquantified way in an unknown direction, with the real prospect of damage to their patients as a direct result.

I want to ask some questions that I hope will clear up uncertainties that currently exist in the minds of medical professionals. If the Secretary of State has set up a new organisation known as the British medical opposition, I would certainly like to be a founder member; I will join up this afternoon. Has the Secretary of State considered alternative models to deliver primary care? I refer him to an article published on 15 April in the *British Medical Journal* by Professor David Morrell, a professor of general practice. He outlines a detailed role for general practice and a contract that would make far more sense. He talks about the need for an increased basic practice allowance. His scheme would also involve annual reports by the GP practices to the family practitioner committee or the area health board, and regular visits by audit committees. I do not have time to go into his proposals in great detail, but general practitioners in my area have told me that it would be a sensible alternative, would lead to the attainment of many of the Government's objectives and would exclude all the objectionable features of the present plans.

It is important that we should hear what the Government have to say about care in the community for the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill. What will be the administrative cost of setting up and maintaining the new system? Will the medical audit be adequately funded? The Government studiously avoided making a positive response to the exchanges on that subject in the other place. What will be the career structure for part-time doctors, particularly part-time women doctors? The Government have made no headway on that fundamental question. According to most informed commentators, the basic practice allowance and the group practice allowance are on the way out. That would have a fundemental effect on the career prospects of part-time doctors, particularly part-time women doctors.

The objective is to achieve greater choice for the patient. How will that be possible if a district health authority has a contract with a hospital to provide services and if a general practitioner has not opted to take control of his own budget, and therefore does not have money to send with the patient to that hospital? What will happen if that general practitioner wants to refer a patient to a hospital that has not entered into a contract with the district health authority? Frequently, there are valid reasons for referring the patient to a hospital outwith the district health authority for specialist treatment, or for other reasons. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that such a referral would still be permitted under the new proposals? That question is causing great concern and anxiety to general practitioners and patients in my area and others.

If implemented, the White Paper proposals will change fundamentally the National Health Service. It will be changed almost beyond recognition. The old ideas of consensus and co-operation will be overtaken by competition and cost-cutting, with the result that the standards of care for the elderly and the chronically sick will fall and the administrative and treatment costs for everybody else will rise. The Government should think again.

5.22 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that the terms of the motion are tactically ill-judged. We have witnessed this afternoon a delightful irony of political history. The House was treated to the spectacle of the Labour party leaping uninhibitedly on the BMA's bandwagon.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that it is not true that doctors always oppose change in the National Health Service. I thought I saw the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) respond to that statement with a nervous twitch. It seemed to stir him into doing his best to paper over the cracks of Labour party history. He said that the doctors had responded quite favourably in the end to the Bevan reports and that we should not be surprised that the Labour party agrees with the BMA. However, that is not what the right hon. Gentleman said in his book.

By chance, to amuse myself on bank holiday Monday, I dipped into his majestic biography of Nye Bevan. On page 103, I discovered his description of exactly what was the mood of the doctors as the NHS reforms were introduced—reforms that the BMA opposed as implacably as it defends the status quo today. The right hon. Gentleman said:

> "Much the strongest bent in the medical mind was a non-political conservatism, a revulsion against all change, a habit of intellectual isolation which enabled them to magnify any proposals for reform into a totalitarian nightmare."

I find an echo or two of those words in today's BMA campaign and an echo or two in the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston.

Conservative Members do not need to disparage the word "conservatism"—the fact that the medical profession is traditionally a conservative profession. That is natural. General practitioners have much to be proud of in the way that they carry out their duties. Our delicate task in the debate is to try to make a judgment on what parts of the general practitioner's world within the NHS should be preserved and what parts should be altered by the reforms. That is the judgment that we have to make on the White Paper and the supporting documents.

There are plenty of good ideas in the White Paper for both doctors and patients, which I strongly support. The medical audit proposals are excellent. The notion of a peer review is supported by many thoughtful doctors. I believe that the perhaps more controversial proposals on indicative or guideline drug budgets for doctors should be welcomed.

We have heard yet again the BMA's traditional trumpet call sounding the alarm that any such proposals will destroy doctors' clinical freedom to prescribe. Those arguments were shown to be ill-founded at the time of the limited list controversy in 1985. They are even more ill-founded today, in the light of that experience. I recall supporting my right hon. and learned Friend in his previous incarnation as Minister of State. He put up with all kinds of attacks when he introduced the limited list. What was the result when the dust settled? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) says that he amended it. I hope that all political debates and consultation papers will lead to amendments. The accusations that were levelled against my right hon. and learned Friend were totally unjustified. When the dust had settled, £75 million had been saved from the nation's drug budget and diverted to better patient care. Moreover, the notion that clinical freedom was threatened or would be destroyed proved to be a complete nonsense. It has not been affected at all.

In a world where resources are finite and the demand for medicine is infinite, there can no longer be any absolute prescribing freedoms. We should welcome the guideline drug budgets for doctors as a non-compulsory yardstick of measurement, particularly since the yardstick can be moved after dialogue with the family practitioner committees and after peer review.

Having commended certain parts of the White Paper, may I also express a few misgivings about the sections that deal with the future management of general practice. My real concern is whether the proposals will actually work and whether they are based on the right principles. I must confess that I am a little worried that there may be some fundamental flaws at the heart of the management proposals for general practitioners. Above all, I fear that the White Paper's ideology of free market forces and the untried innovations that flow from that ideology may not satisfactorily be transplanted to the traditional and caring body politic of general practice—at least, not without some hideous practical difficulties.

The first flaw I detect in the White Paper is the impression it gives that all these sweeping management reforms are necessary because general practitioners go about their duties in a way that is inefficient and expensive. If that is Whitehall's view, it is not a view that is widely shared by patients at the grass roots; nor does it seem to be justified by the available statistics. As far as I can discover, Britain's doctors—as gatekeepers of the NHS—operate one of the cheaper and more effective primary health care systems in the Western world. Medical salaries here are pinned down to less than half the levels that exist in some European countries and in the USA. NHS administrative costs are low, at 4·5 per cent. of the total, compared with administrative costs of 21 per cent. of the total in America's competitive, free market medical system.

One part of the Government's reforms that perplexes me concerning their call for greater business efficiency and consumer choice is the starting point of the grievance that doctors are inefficient. Of course there are some bad doctors; there are a few bad apples in any profession. There are some 9 to 5 spirits who seem to have forgotten their vocation. However, on the whole the evidence suggests that there is widespread patient satisfaction with general practitioner services in this country, and I find it curious that a White Paper which is championing consumer demand in medicine should provide no evidence of consumer demand for reforms of general practice.

As I see it, the whole key to the philosophy of this White Paper towards the doctors is summed up in a sentence on page 48:

> "The practices which attract the most custom will attract the most money."

That sounds good as a fly-by-night economics textbook sentence published by the university of Chicago business school but, coming down to our own National Health Service, what it means is that the ultimate reward for improved efficiency and improved advertising is that market forces will send successful doctors a longer list of patients from which the doctors can earn higher and higher capitation fees and augment their incomes still

further by the performance bonus rule which allows them to retain in their practices 50 per cent. of the savings they make from their budgets.

We should not try to pretend that such proposals are anything other than a very radical reform. After all, they go against the trend of general practitioners trying to keep small lists, as they have been for some years now. It seems to be a decisive shift away from dear old " Dr. Finlay's Casebook," as super-doc comes to the supermarket with these sorts of ideas. Will the reforms work, and if they do, will they damage, as some doctors fear, the fundamental basis of doctor-patient relationships or the established collegiate basis of doctor-to-doctor relationships?

These reforms may work in certain prosperous surburban or metropolitan areas such as parts of the home counties or the city of Westminster, where the residential community consists largely of youngish people of working age, who may well be content with the brusque "Wham bam, thank you, doctor, for getting me back on my feet as quickly as possible" approach, because on the whole that approach to medicine will be quite popular with the age and social group likely to suffer only from short bursts of illness.

However, consider for a moment a completely different kind of community. I take the town of Ramsgate from my own constituency, which is a seaside town with a population of whom 38 per cent. are pensioners and which has the biggest department of social security office in south-east England, with 16,000 people on benefit. It has a particularly high concentration of disabled, disadvantaged, geriatric, chronically sick and mentally handicapped people. In short, doctors there deal with a lot of patients who need time and care. I do not see, in the words of the White Paper, many pluses for elderly and deprived patients in that sort of community, for many of whom the language of consumer choice in general practice might just as well be Mandarin Chinese. They want guidance, not the ability to make yuppy-type consumer choice decisions.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): What would the hon. Gentleman say to a constituent who came to see me on Friday to say that, after false diagnosis, his wife needed pretty urgent surgery to the nose after many months of distress? She went to Ealing hospital as a result and was told that she would still have to wait many weeks before the operation could take place, but if he could afford £1,000 it could be carried out next week. What does the White Paper do in this regard?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Member tries to tempt me into completely different areas from those which are the subject of this debate, and I must resist that temptation other than to express sympathy with his constituent. Whether it is his constituent or my constituent with a problem, I want to emphasise that I am not talking about so-called bad doctors or inefficient practices.

I know a practice in Ramsgate which lives up to and exceeds many of the standards set by the Government in the working papers. Its child immunisation rates are in excess of the Government's target of 90 per cent.; its drug bill is 23 per cent. below the average for the area; it operates minor surgery sessions; it holds preventive medicine clinics; it is computerised, with modern capability and enjoys a good professional and popular reputation. It is just the sort of practice which should benefit from the White Paper proposals, and yet the doctors in that practice regard the Government's management and budgetary ideas and target payment schemes in particular with feelings close to horror. Why do they have those very strong feelings? The answer is that they believe—and I think they are right, with 12 per cent. of their patients over 75 and another 33 per cent. over 65—that they are serving the kind of community which can best be looked after by the gentler culture of traditional general practice, with all its occasional necessary time-wasting delays and pauses for counselling and sympathy which a caring service involves, rather than the harsher disciplines of competitive, doctor—versus—doctor consumer choice, free market medicine portrayed in the White Paper.

I do not want to fall into the trap which the Labour party has fallen into of knocking everything in the White Paper on the curious principle that any stigma will do to beat a dogma, but there should be more flexibility in some of the Government's proposals. I could not find much indication of that vital ingredient in the White Paper, but I was glad to hear in some of the things my right hon. and learned Friend was saying today, and indeed in the tone of some of the recent press statements and working papers, that a gentler and more flexible note may now be injected into some of these proposals as they affect doctors.

Can I follow the point made by the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) in supporting his call to the Minister to pay some attention to that profound article by Professor David Morell in a recent edition of the *British Medical Journal*? His point, as I understood it, was that the Government could get everything they wanted, but the foundation stone for the new contract should not be so much free market forces as the ideal that a medical practice serves the community in which it is based and that the standard of service by doctors to a community could be defined, graded and rewarded not by competitive forces within that community but by an annual audit carried out under the supervision of the area family practitioner committee. There was a great deal of merit in that proposal.

Finally, whether we are talking about Professor Morell's ideas or the Government's more radical proposals, when tackling this subject of reforming general practice a little humility and caution is essential. We are getting into deep and uncharted waters. I was sorry to hear the Secretary of State sound a little disparaging as he brushed aside any suggestion that pilot schemes might be workable. It is always bad news when the Labour party has a good idea, but the pilot scheme has something to commend it, because rural, coastal, inner city, suburban and metropolitan areas all have their different problems, and a different programme of pilot schemes in each one to see how some of these ideas work would be sensible.

The decent, diligent family doctor is part of the culture of Britain, part of the fabric of our society, and on the whole general practitioners have served their communities well. They rightly enjoy a far higher level of popularity and respect than a great many other professionals including, I might say, politicians. Maybe some general practitioners do need a bit of a shake-up and many of them would accept the best of the Government's new ideas and agree that the White Paper does give a useful nudge towards some welcome changes, but let us proceed by evolution rather than by revolution and let us have more time,

[Mr. Aitken]

collaboration and path-finding by pilot schemes, because that is the way of accomplishing what the Secretary of State and all his supporters wish to achieve.

5.38 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Secretary of State has had the unique distinction of uniting the whole of the medical world including all the royal colleges, against himself. I see today that he also has the opposition of the community health councils, who found the issuing of his White Paper

"'objectionable', the proposals 'drastic' and the time scale 'unacceptably hasty'."

and are

"asking him to suspend implementation of these 'undesirable' and 'impractical' plans."

Today, we are discussing the views of the doctors. In preparation for the debate I conducted a survey of all the doctors in my constituency. They voted 47 against the Secretary of State's proposals and only three in favour. I asked them for any further comments and I received a huge sheaf of impassioned correspondence which I should be only too pleased to allow the Secretary of State to inspect.

I should like to read a small selection of the comments that I received, to which I hope the Secretary of State will pay attention. Dr. Spalding wrote:

"I am disturbed by the proposals of the Government's White Paper on the National Health Service. I see them as doing great harm to general practice. I have been in practice in Manor Park for 25 years and retire in one week and so I have no vested interest either way.

The White Paper is pervaded by a materialistic attitude to medicine. Money matters but it should not be the only ruler. Interestingly, this attitude is revealed in the White Paper by the use of the word 'Consumer', where Patient is meant . . . I am afraid that if its ideas are enacted, the patient will indeed become merely a consumer."

Dr. Patel said:

"No, the new proposals won't help the NHS, they will destroy it. Please ask the Government whether the advisers on the new proposals are full-time NHS doctors or economists? The new proposals will destroy the doctor and patient relationship. There would be a two tier fragmented Health Service."

Dr. Phillips said:

"Medicine is not a business and should never be run entirely on that basis. In general practice it would not improve patient care. Extra administration would be necessary—there is already too much. If the Government expects us to be capable of running the practice on a financial level, and negotiate with hospitals, etc. we should be considered capable of running the internal affairs of our practices without outside pressure and interference."

Dr. Kapur said:

"the opting out of hospitals, the buying of hospital facilities by Family Practitioner Committees, the restrictions on the GPs' budget and referral rights; the increased (60 per cent.) payment on number of patients—all these factors plus many others will lead to a deterioration of morale, and to two levels of NHS care."

Dr. Graham wrote:

"In my opinion the new contract introduces increased bureaucracy causing a greater distance between doctors and patients and distrust. As a course organiser I am alarmed that the Government are demanding 20 hours in surgery per week as I spend two or more sessions a week in Newham General Hospital teaching post-graduates. When I see a patient who looks ill I cannot tell whether he has influenza needing rest, food poisoning or acute leukaemia where a bone marrow transplant costs £220,000. It is only detailed hospital tests that will eventually uncover the truth, by which time the patient is out of my control. He would not want a GP coming to Hospital behind his back to consult with the specialist and possibly saying, 'Our practice cannot afford this treatment in future this year'."

Dr. David Keable-Elliot said:

"The Government's proposed health service changes will seriously damage patient care and risk trust between doctor and patient. For the first time, general practitioner services are to be cash limited. This means a possible rationing of the care we provide each year. We are to be offered financial incentives to save on the cost of patient care. . .We are to be offered rewards not to treat patients, or to delay their care whether this be arranging hospital tests, giving treatment or referring patients to a specialist for a possible operation. We are to be encouraged to arrange for patients to go to the cheapest hospital, perhaps not the best, the nearest or the one with the shortest waiting list. The Government want GPs to become 'rationers' of health care and thus take the blame for chronic underfunding of the NHS. Once that happens, our concern is that we will be blamed for the service's failures and that will then be used as an excuse to force further changes which will finally end the health service as we know it. We are not prepared to risk the trust and confidence our patients have in us. How long will that trust last when they know we have an incentive not to act in their best interest?"

Dr. Mahendran wrote:

"Budget or cost cutting on an open ended comprehensive service such as the NHS is unacceptable. An unlimited number of patients under a doctor will mean no time for patients who deserve more time and attention. Chronically ill, disabled and patients requiring multiple therapy will lose out from this White Paper. If Regional Hospitals opt out the patients will have to travel to distant hospitals to obtain basic specialist attention or hospitalised care. This cannot mean that patients have greater choice. Even if Doctors' surgeries remain prudent and minimise costs, what guarantee is there that the money allocated for the subsesquent years will match the needs and inflationary increases?"

He adds the postscript:

"In the entire discussion Kenneth Clarke sounds as if the NHS is a wasteful and inefficient service. Does he not realise that throughout the world there is no parallel to the effective, comprehensive health service provided by the NHS taking into account the total cost incurred?"

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) also raised that point.

Dr. Dubal said:

"As budget holders we would be asked to offer our patients treatment influenced more by the cost than the needs of the patient. I have two patients with kidney transplants and a third on a waiting list for a kidney transplant. Each time I write medicine for these patients, as recommended by the hospital to stop transplant rejection it costs over £100. I also have several elderly patients with multiple diseases and disabilities which demand a lot of time, energy and social support. If I am to be a budget holder I would have to think seriously about keeping these patients on my list as I would not have the time or money to look after these patients—even if I tried hard. I would have to refer the patient to the cheapest hospital and look for the cheapest drug to treat them—the so-called 'shop around'. I do not believe that a patient who has paid his national Insurance and his 'dues' should be offered a second class treatment. If the Government cannot afford the National Health Service they should tell the people and patients, rather than hide behind the doctors and get their objectives done by forcing the doctors to do that for them."

He goes on to praise group practice and says that he had thought that the Government favoured it. He adds:

"By abolishing Group Practice allowance there will be a disincentive to form group practices with the resultant fall in the standard of patient care."

Dr. Bapna wanted me to tell the Government that

"Doctors are not running a shop, they are doing what is best for their patients."

Dr. Patel asked:

"How can a doctor give more time and do all the preventative work by increasing the size of the list?"

I hope that the Secretary of State is paying close attention to the views of doctors in my constituency.

Dr. Lazarus said:

"Having considered all aspects, I feel my time spent in budgetary and choosing cheap alternatives and unnecessary form filling would be better spent giving my patients a service I already provide."

Dr. Desai said:

"The new contract is likely to cause deterioration in the service as doctors will not have time for promotive and preventative work if they have to look after more patients. In inner cities the situation is likely to worsen. The proposed payment structure for preventative work and immunisations etc., will make doctors despondent and lose interest in such work. The targets stated are not achievable as they depend on the patients."

Dr. Watt said:

"The immunisation and cervical smear targets are unreasonable. GPs cannot be a paternalistic police force forcing people to have what is good for them."

Dr. Christopher Derret said:

"Increased capitation fees are not an incentive to doctors to spend less time with each patient. Many patients say they already think their doctor gives too little time for each consultation. Quantity not quality is to be paid for. In the inner cities morbidity is higher and patient consultation rate can be almost double that in some prosperous areas."

The hon. Member for Thanet, South also mentioned that point. Dr. Derret went on:

"There is a widespread fear that the Government has a hidden agenda for the privatisation of Health Care."

Dr. Cramsie said——

Mr. Aitken: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to read out verbatim quotes from doctors' letters with no break when many hon. Members on both sides of the House have speeches which they have thought about carefully and wish to deliver?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): It is for hon. Members to deploy their arguments as they wish, but I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and I appeal for very short speeches.

Mr. Leighton: I take your point, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I take the point made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South, but we are debating the views of the doctors. I am giving the views of rank and file doctors working in my constituency. Those are the views they have given me, which they have asked me to represent in Parliament. I shall compromise and read out two more letters. Perhaps the House will then have got the message from their remarks.

Dr. Rachman says:

"The plan to change the BPA to a per capita allowance will discourage existing practices from taking on new partners —there will be no incentive to. Instead I believe we will all be encouraged to employ assistants—these are often women and have no prospects of promotion or extension of their role. This is a retrograde move which seriously affects the position of all new young doctors seeking partnerships."

Dr. Haas says:

"I am very concerned that patients will find it hard to develop trust in their doctors as they will no longer see us as their advocates but as agents of cost control. Most of all, the health of those able to shout least loud, the old and physically handicapped will suffer."

That is an accurate reflection of doctors' views in my constituency. I would be delighted to give the Secretary of State the pile of correspondence so that he can read it. He should not laugh at the doctors' views or mock them. The doctors work in the depressed and deprived inner city. They have many problems. They considered the White Paper, then contacted me and asked me to put their views in the House.

How can the Secretary of State implement the proposals against what even he calls the "British medical opposition"? If the doctors do not become budget holders and if the hospitals do not opt out, what is left of the proposals? The Secretary of State should listen carefully and respectfully to the views of doctors. He should take his White Paper away and launch a genuine consultation. He should proceed by agreement to achieve a strong, free and adequately funded NHS.

5.51 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): It was fascinating to listen to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). Although it may destroy his political career, I must say that I rather like him. He held himself spellbound by some of the most awful codswallop. What have the doctors been reading? They must have been reading letters from the hon. Gentleman and the British Medical Association. If they want to hear what the Government are doing through the White Paper I would be only too delighted—and I am sure that many of my hon. Friends would be delighted—to speak to the doctors in Newham, North-East. I lay that down as a friendly challenge.

Mr. Leighton: The hon. Gentleman would have to be rather careful. If he spoke to the doctors like that, several of them in their white coats might think that it was a section 42 job and take him away.

Mr. Hayes: I concede that one on points.

It was fascinating to listen to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). It is always a joy to listen to such eloquence. Although I thought about what he said carefully, in the words of F. E. Smith, I was none the wiser or better informed. There was a lot of chat about destabilisation and under-resourcing. It suddenly dawned on me that this speech was coming from a member of a Labour Cabinet which cut capital expenditure on hospital building by 30 per cent., which for the first time in the history of the National Health Service agreed to cut the overall budget of the Health Service in real terms and which agreed to spend more on defence than on the Health Service—the opposite to what is happening now.

I want to draw to the attention of the House what was probably the most telling remark in the debate so far. It was made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He said that there would be a breach of the trust between doctor and patient and he asked how a patient would be able to look a doctor in the eye and trust him. The hon. Gentleman is right, especially when one considers the doctors who put skulls and crossbones up in their surgeries, the doctors who have been warning the most vulnerable members of society, such as the elderly, that they will not be welcome at their surgeries and the doctors who, at the instigation of the BMA, have put at the bottom of their prescriptions, "Voting Conservative will damage your health." That is where there has been a breach of trust. It has been a breach of trust by a small minority of general practitioners and by the overwhelming majority of the BMA.

[Mr. Hayes]

I raised a point with the hon. Member for Livingston earlier. He was giving a long litany of the opposition from the medical bodies, but he did not mention the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales. He stood there as if polyunsaturated margarine would not melt in his mouth and said that the association was the stooge of the Government. Yet the members of that association are the people who run the Health Service. I and many of my hon. Friends believe that their views are important. With the leave of the House, I shall quote the association's conclusions, warts and all, which is what consultation is all about. The association said:

"Overall, the Association welcomes many of the proposals in the White Paper. These include the more effective use of resources, greater responsiveness to the needs of the general public, clinical audit, greater delegation to the operational level, more involvement of clinicians in management and incentives for providing better services. The Association is also supportive of the separation of funding and provision of services.

It has to be recognised, however, that whilst many of these proposals are welcome, there are also a number of risks. The principal risk is that in the more diffuse NHS that is likely to emerge in the post White paper situation, it may be more difficult for the Service to guarantee comprehensive services to the population as a whole. It is therefore essential that RHAs, FPCs and DHAs are given the ability and authority to ensure that services are accessible, integrated, of a high quality and well funded. If these conditions are met, the NHS can look forward to the future with confidence."

That is constructive criticism such as my right hon. and learned Friend welcomes.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how many letters he has received from GPs and consultants supporting the Government's proposals? Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), who was criticised for doing so, I could read out a file of letters from doctors who oppose the Government. How many letters has the hon. Gentleman received in support?

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Lady has raised a valid point. I have received many letters from general practitioners who are wholly opposed to the White Paper. But when I go to see them and talk to them about it, they realise that the proposals are working for their patients. The overwhelming majority of general practitioners care deeply about their patients and do not like to be conned by people making cynical political capital out of other people's misfortune, as is happening now. The time must come when, in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), the dust must be allowed to settle, the megaphone diplomacy must stop and we must get round the table with those who care about the Health Service—the GPs, the consultants, the administrators and the nurses. There is much in the proposals for all of them, as they will appreciate soon. In the past—and I see my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Whip sitting here—I have been highly critical of Government policy on the Health Service—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes. That may come as a shock to some of my hon. Friends. Some of us have voted against the Government, but when they get it right, we should darn well support them.

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend spoke about letters he had received from doctors. Will he take the point that those doctors have been grossly misled and misinformed by their own leaders about the true contents of the review?

Mr. Hayes: Of course, many of us on the Select Committee raised that issue with the people who run the BMA, and they have said, "This is what we feel is in the White Paper," or, "This is what we think might be in the White Paper." However, when confronted with the facts and the reality, they are speechless—*[Interruption.]* Let us be constructive. This is a time when there should be sensible negotiations.

Going back to something else that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) said, this is not the first time such things have happened because all of us can remember notices going up in local surgeries in 1985 about the limited list. We all received letters from doctors, consultants and even from elderly patients who said, "My health will deteriorate if this wicked proposal goes through." That proposal was put forward by the then Minister of State, my right hon. and learned Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Health. There was sensible negotiation on that, the NHS saved £75 million and patients are receiving a good standard of health care. If one speaks to a GP now and says, "Hang on, a few years ago I saw a poster in your surgery about limited lists," that GP will probably say, "Oh well, we agreed with it really." I suspect that when GPs hear the truth now, the same thing will happen.

However, there are a few things that I should like my right hon. and learned Friend to take into account—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] This is not a criticism. It is about negotiation and consultation. I want to put to my right hon. and learned Friend some of the points that many doctors have put to me and to some of my hon. Friends. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has said on television and on radio that there will be compromise and negotiation. I ask him to look carefully at the rural practice allowance, which is concerning many doctors. I ask him to look also at the 20-hours provision because it is absolutely right that there should be a division between part-timers and full-timers and many doctors are concerned that the Secretary of State means 20 hours in the surgery, which might cause problems. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will look again at such things and at the targets for immunisation which in many areas, especially in highly ethnically populated areas, might cause some difficulty. Perhaps it will be worth considering some form of exemption for doctors who have done their very best to get people in for cervical smears and immunisation but whose patients do not turn up. I do not see why the doctors should be penalised.

The Health Service is really about people getting their operations. One can wax lyrical about more money and about more doctors and nurses, but what people really care about is getting into hospital for their operation. Once they are in hospital, they like the nurses and the doctors—they do not much like the food—and they are satisfied with the service. The main thing is to get the patients into hospital.

The crucial thing about this whole review—my right hon. and learned Friend said this at the beginning of his speech—is that the efficiency trap will be abolished. We have a ridiculous state of affairs at the moment. We are paying hospitals to close beds for economic reasons. More

patients are being treated, more operations are being performed—this is happening every day—but approximately 20 per cent. of National Health Service beds are being closed. That will cease if the money travels with the patient because it will then be in the interests of hospitals to keep beds open.

I turn briefly to the private sector. There will be shock and gasps of horror from Opposition Members who will ask how one dares to mention the private sector. The private sector is working at about 45 per cent. capacity. Let us examine what is happening in, dare I say it, South Glamorgan where the South Glamorgan health authority has done a deal with an excellent private hospital in Southampton called Chalybeate. The South Glamorgan health authority has contracted all its open heart surgery to that private hospital. The families of the patients are looked after. They are transported to Southampton and put up in hotels. The operations are carried out speedily and efficiently. There is absolutely no cost to the patient. What is more, because of surplus capacity the South Glamorgan health authority is saving money. If ever there was an example of co-operation between the private and public sectors, that is it. That is what we are aiming for in the White Paper because what is happening in South Glamorgan should be happening all over the country and we should have the opportunity to let it happen.

The last point that I wish to raise with my right hon. and learned Friend——

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield) *rose——*

Mr. Hayes: No, on another occasion. I shall not give way because other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

I should like to say a few brief words about the Treasury. It is important to mention the Treasury because in the past the Treasury has been able to play all sorts of people off against each other. The Select Committee may say, "£2 billion is needed for the Health Service", the nurses can say, "£X billion" and the doctors, "£Y billion", but no one really knows how much the Health Service really needs because no one knows the cost of an operation or a treatment.

Mr. Battle: What about tax cuts on private health?

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman refers to tax cuts, but they are totally irrelevant to what we are talking about.

How can one plan for the future unless one knows how much operations and treatment cost? When information technology comes in and when doctors know the cost of an operation, persuasive and almost unanswerable arguments will be put to the Treasury about putting more money into the Health Service. In the past no one has known where the money has been going, but at least we will now be able to know that.

Before I sit down, I should like to say a few brief words about the existing system because in the meantime we have a problem, especially in areas with large waiting lists. My own West Essex health authority is in the top 22. My right hon. and learned Friend has helpfully given us waiting list initiative money and, although we have also been given £800,000 in growth money, we have suddenly been told that the North East Thames regional health authority, which has loaned us £1·5 million to be paid back over three years, is going back on its agreement and wants to take that £800,000 growth money. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to look carefully at that instance of gross mismanagement, which must be totally contrary to his wishes and those of his health team. Growth money must be for growth and must be specifically earmarked.

All in all, there may be difficulties with my right hon. and learned Friend's White Paper and with the working document, but I advise him to listen to the views of the general practitioners and of the Health Service professionals because I further advise him that when they hear what the White Paper is trying to do and that it will work for patients, they will support it.

6.6 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I shall be as brief as possible, simply because I wish to let as many other hon. Members as possible speak in the debate. I shall speak faster than my normally fast pace because I want to put on the record some of the comments that have been put to me by local doctors; after all, this is their debate.

One depressing development, both in the debate and before we reached this stage, has been the vitriolic language of the Government and their supporters and the abuse that they have hurled at general practitioners because of their opposition to the National Health Service proposals. In choosing to react with the language of confrontation and abuse, the Secretary of State is making a big mistake and is completely misunderstanding the mood and reasoned arguments of the profession, which will be faced with implementing the changes if they are passed by the House.

General practitioners are opposed to these provisions not for the sake of opposition, but because they genuinely feel that patient care and the National Health Service will be the losers if the proposals are not amended drastically. I have received the highest ever mailing in my constituency from individuals and groups opposed to the Government's proposals. In the words of Angus district health authority, its members are agreed that

"The proposals in the White Paper are so far reaching and so unwarranted that the Council should take immediate action in an effort to enlist the help and support of every inhabitant in Angus in fighting against implementation of these proposals".

Let the Government be in no doubt about the strength of opposition to these White Paper proposals. I have never heard doctors so united, so angry and so opposed to any set of measures as they are to these Government proposals. I am sure that the situation in my constituency is no different from that in many others.

The doctors' basic argument is not about money. It is based purely on the relationship between doctor and patient and is about their ability to provide the best quality of service as professionals and at reasonable cost to the taxpayer. Doctors have told me that there are fundamental and dangerous trends in the Government's proposals that will inevitably strike at the heart of the National Health Service.

Unamended, the proposals will mean that cost rather than care will become the criterion for health provision. Medical professionals will become more like accountants, bargaining over prices and debt collection. Inevitably, it will be in the interests of health boards and GP budget holders to look for the cheapest service in order to direct cash to other areas. Inevitably, under these proposals, there will be an inbuilt bias towards offering only the most convenient and profitable services. The Minister should

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

make that clear to the general public, because in every survey the public have made it clear to the Government that people's preference is for the maximum service delivered as close to their own homes as possible.

That will simply not happen under the Government's proposals. Indeed, the opposite will occur. The accent will be on delivery of uncomplicated care for the young and generally fit adults, not on complex, unprofitable services. That will inevitably lead to poorer facilities and opportunities for patients, particularly the elderly or chronically sick. I always thought that those were the people for whom the National Health Service was designed to cater, but the proposals will take us in the opposite direction.

Scarce resources will mean that medical treatment is placed to one side while doctors are placed in a new bureaucracy, and it will mean the advertising which this system will, by definition, spawn. There will be fragmentation—I find this the least forgivable thing that the Government are introducing—of the National Health Service into a two-tier hospital system, thus ending the national, comprehensive system of care that we have so far enjoyed.

My local doctors want to make it very clear to the Government that they see dangers in the proposals—dangers that budgets will dictate treatment, and that there will be a financial inducement not to treat. For example, regarding tests and referrals, doctors will be given an incentive to use only the cheapest hospitals, and there will be a break in the close relationship between GPs and locally based consultants. The GPs will be drawn towards refusing new patients who require long-term, expensive treatment, putting at risk the worst off in deprived areas, the old and the disabled. Because of budgetary restraints, general practitioners may well not accept patients who need expensive drugs.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Welsh: If the hon. Member does not mind, I will not give way. He may get a chance to speak later.

Mr. Hind: But the BMA——

Mr. Welsh: This is not the BMA; these are my local doctors. It is the doctors who are the profesionals and who have to deal with this and they have a right to be heard in the House.

There is a fear that doctors will increase the number of young, generally fit adults on their lists, and be forced to do so by their competitors. The very thing that the Government are introducing—the force of competition—will lead to doctors taking a path that they would not normally take, instead of giving treatment to all their patients as they need and deserve. That is inevitable and inbuilt in the arrangements.

I want to use the words of the general practitioners to describe their concern, because they will have the reality on their hands if the Government push these measures through. One doctor says:

"The introduction of practice budgets and indicative drug budgets is seen as a cost-cutting exercise which serves to put financial pressures on the GP and undoubtedly will lead to a deterioration in the doctor-patient relationship. All doctors are aware that economies can be made in drug prescribing and the profession should be supported in their attempts to diminish costs in such a way that it will not adversely affect patient care, rather than have radical, ill-conceived methods imposed on it. The increase in remuneration from capitation fees will lead to a rise in list sizes rather than the reduction we have seen in recent years. This means less time per patient, a decline in the quality of care and ultimately a decrease in the number of GPs."

I put again to the Minister the point regarding women general practitioners. Women have a right to expect that the Minister will have regard to their problems and address them. What is their future under the Government's proposals? Can he guarantee that women doctors will not be adversely treated and will be allowed to carry on making their very important contribution to the medical profession? I hope that the Minister will answer that point.

My local doctors have made detailed, reasoned criticisms of the Government's proposals on budgeting, capitation fees, effects on partnerships and women doctors and drug budgeting. Only time prevents me from analysing them. No doubt they will be raised as the debate continues and as the Government move towards legislation.

I want to put one more point to the Government. One doctor says:

"my colleagues and I do not see the new proposals as working for patients but rather as working against patients. The new charter will provide less time and less choice for patients and will engender within the profession a mentality more akin to achieving personal wealth rather than patients' health. The knock-on effects will be to accelerate the rate of litigation in this country and a litigation strewn profession is ultimately damaging for patients and more expensive. I must condemn . . . the Secretary for Health for attempting to bluster and hustle the profession on this matter and I must further condemn him for throwing up a smoke screen over the real issues. It is particularly noticeable that, when asked pertinent questions, he merely diverts the discussion by blaming us for 'feeling for our wallets'. It is the Secretary of State who is feeling for the NHS wallet and he is prepared to see patient care suffer in the execution of this."

I have tried to state how my doctors feel, because this debate is about them. My plea is quite simply for the Government to think again. If they insist on these changes, they should introduce them gradually on an experimental basis to see whether they work. If there are all these great benefits to be gained from such experiments, let them be tried and tested and let everybody see them. If this scheme is simply imposed on the medical profession we may well find that the loser will be the nation, because our National Health Service will suffer a massive trauma and its essence will be destroyed if the Government go ahead unhindered. My message is clear and my plea is, quite simply, that the Government think again.

6.16 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): If I really believed all the dire warnings that we have heard from all parts of the House, I should be the most frightened man in the House tonight because I am numbered among the chronically sick and am on extremely expensive medication. As it is, however, I believe what my right hon. and learned Friend has said, I believe in his White Paper and he has my support. The White Paper is a most far-reaching document that will undoubtedly set the course for the Health Service in the future.

In the 40 years since its inception the National Health Service has transformed the general practitioner from a family doctor who had both to provide for his patients and his community's care and win for himself an income into

a Government servant who no longer has to consider the budget he spends. That is a very far cry indeed from what existed before the NHS was set up.

Now, as we know, when a young doctor wants to enter general practice he can get a start only if there is a vacancy in a group practice or if that group practice decides to take on an additional partner. At least, thanks to the White Paper, more vacancies should occur when doctors have to retire at 65.

Before the NHS existed doctors were practising in a competitive world. In the world before the NHS any doctor who chose to go into practice could put up his plate and see what patients he could pick up. My father, who practised in Argyllshire and in Northumberland, told me that in those days when one got a call late at night one did not hesitate to go, because if one did not another doctor got the patient. That was a competitive edge that does not exist any more.

In the past 40 years of the NHS the balance has changed so that the modern GP, while he is no doubt just as dedicated as his predecessor and a great deal more effective as a provider of cures for diseases which were once incurable, has not had to consider or take responsibility for the financial consequences of his action. He has become a different type of practitioner. His salary is not won in competition with his fellows. He is a state servant answerable to the family practitioner service, which is currently funded by the Department of Health on an open-ended contract to the tune of £4·2 billion a year—a threefold increase since 1978-79.

To change that and to impose budgetary limits is bound to be seen as an assault on a situation that suits GPs very well. Suddenly they are being asked to relearn those financial skills that their predecessors took for granted. It would be surprising if they did not protest, especially as some of them may be affected by the changes in a way that may reduce their incomes.

I want now to refer to a question that I asked my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State during Question Time last week concerning rural practices. I was not talking about a rural practice in a sparsely populated area that, according to the White Paper, is to receive special help, but one which is to some extent restricted by the ward limitations in the White Paper. A country practice, such as many in my constituency, cannot significantly increase its list size however hard its doctors work. Even if it could physically cope with an increased patient load, there are no other patients for that practice to treat. I do not see how it can have the basic practice allowance reduced from 60 to 40 per cent. and be expected to make up the difference out of capitation if the patients are not there.

By the same token, such a practice is to lose the rural practice allowance. My right hon. and learned Friend will know that that allowance really relates to the mileage that the doctor does in his constituency. It is the sort of thing that each one of us, as Members of Parliament, accepts as part of our constituency expenses. If a rural practitioner sees his basic practice allowance reduced, and is required to make up the difference from a capitation that he cannot achieve, and he loses his rural practice allowance, how can he possibly feel other than that his remuneration is being reduced? Although I heard my right hon. and learned Friend give the average figure for GPs' salaries after the White Paper, nevertheless it is an average figure. I would be grateful if in that connection he would look at the situation of rural practitioners.

The downward pressure on drug budgets, which will have the greatest effect on the pharmaceutical industry and make it look at its pricing in a way it has never done before, may make isolated dispensaries in country areas less viable. Again, the rural practitioner could find himself at a disadvantage. As ancillary and attached staff are probably more important to country practices, cost-limiting that section of the allowance may endanger such services as the mini-buses that many practices run to take their patients to and from surgery.

Then there is the position of women GPs referred to by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). Many women GPs are part-timers, because they are married. They are concerned that the new proposals will militate against them and practices will prefer a full-time male doctor to, for sake of argument, two part-time women assistants. I understand that more than 50 per cent. of doctors training for general practice are women. As matters now stand, there is a financial advantage to be gained by a group practice in taking on women as part-timers, but that advantage will disappear if the White Paper proposals go through as they are at present. I believe that those proposals must be reconsidered. I do not believe that there should be financial disadvantages that could militate against women remaining as part-time GPs. They are popular, excellent and a valuable asset to the service.

The question of screening, and especially the surveillance of elderly patients, is set out on page 30, paragraph II of the new contract. A doctor from a practice in my constituency, which has 500 patients of 75 years and over, told me that surveillance would cost that practice 500 man hours per year, yet he doubted the value of that exercise because of the age of the patients. That point was supported by a doctor in a BBC medical programme. In that doctor's view, screening can produce psychological distress without achieving anything worthwhile. He said that, unless definite and provable benefits can be demonstrated from such screening of the elderly, the programme will simply be a waste of money and doctors' time.

The White Paper rightly places emphasis on preventive medicine, vaccinations, immunisation and cervical smears. It sets a very high target for GPs to reach before they receive payment for that work, unlike the present situation where they are paid for each treatment. I question whether the target for cervical smears is realistic. I shall cite the figures given to me by one doctor for his practice. Of the women he tested, 10 per cent. had had a hysterectomy and 8 per cent. refused a smear. In his practice, the annual turnover of women patients was 20 per cent. Accepting those figures, he claimed that a figure of 82 per cent. was achieveable if one included women who had had hysterectomies, or 71 per cent. if, and reasonably, one did not. One might honestly question the value of a cervical smear on a woman who has had a hysterectomy. If he is right—and I know how dangerous it is to generalise from the particular—is 80 per cent. the right target for cervical smears or is that a target beyond the reach of the average practice?

One of the points that has been raised with me in so many of the letters that I, too, have received about the White Paper concerns the status of the chronically sick —someone like myself who requires expensive medical treatment to stay alive. From my reading of the White Paper and the working documents, I believe that I am right

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

in believing that the chronically sick have an inalienable right to be on a GP's list, to be treated in hospital and to receive whatever medication is laid down for them. What is more, no GP will be put at a financial disadvantage by having such a patient on his or her list, nor will his drug budget be considered to be overspent because that patient requires very expensive drugs, which takes the GP over his or her stated target. I believe that to be the case, but I would be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could reinforce that point in his reply. By the same token, can my right hon. and learned Friend state categorically that, whether a hospital chooses to be self-governing or not, it will be required to provide certain essential core services to its local community?

During my time in hospital and having talked over a number of years to those who run hospitals, I have been told again and again how much they wished they had control of their budgets and were allowed to develop the assets of their hospitals to maximise resources. I remember a consultant at the Battle hospital in Reading telling me that, if he had his way, he would build a 10-bedded private unit in the grounds of the hospital because of the funds that that would generate for the hospital overall. He was not interested in the out-of-date, political point-scoring about a two-tier system. He was interested in getting the maximum resources for a large general hospital. When I asked him why he did not do so, he said that it was because the regional health authority would consider that the additional funds were its and that the Battle hospital might not benefit at all. Therefore, nothing was done.

The White Paper encourages me to think that in future hospitals—especially those that are self-governing—will be able to make the best use of their assets knowing that by doing so they can improve their cash flows and their services. I welcome such a proposal.

6.27 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I am happy and grateful to speak in this short debate. I have been instructed that I have no more than five minutes in which to do it. It is obviously an important debate and many Opposition Members have talked about what is, perhaps, the first love of anyone in the Labour party—the National Health Service. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was right when he said that many doctors, and indeed many patients, feel that they have been deceived by the Government. Nobody at the last election realised what was in the mind of the Government. It was obvious that the Government were not prepared to put that in their manifesto to the people.

Doctors and patients know very well that, if one increases the number of patients, one cannot increase the number of hours in a day, so there must be less time per patient. That strikes me as simple arithmetic. We know that in future the prosperous surgeries will be in areas where people are generally prosperous. In areas such as Sheffield, which I represent—the inner cities, the poor areas and certainly some of the rural areas—practices will have certain difficulties that will not be resolved by the White Paper.

The Secretary of State has got angry about this issue and has hit out at the Labour party for exploiting the situation for political purposes. The only reason why the Secretary of State has attacked politicians, patients and doctors is that he must defend thin ground and he finds it difficult to do so. Instead of attempting to explain the Government's case, he has gone on the attack.

The Secretary of State has said that doctors' opposition to the proposals is based on different motives from the Labour party's opposition. From my discussions with doctors, I believe that their motives are similar to mine —they are worried about the future state of the Health Service rather than their wages or anything else. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has said that, as a result of the proposals, GPs' pay will rise substantially, but their main concern is not pay, but patient care and what will happen to their surgeries. If the scheme is so good, why are so many doctors against it? Where are all the doctors who are in favour?

Mrs. Mahon: Does my hon. Friend share my disgust at the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), who could not produce a single letter from a GP in support of the proposals? I found it contemptible when he said that, when he had gone along to talk to doctors, they had changed their minds. He must think that we are all daft and that GPs are thick, which is insulting.

Mr. Michie: My hon. Friend took the words out of my mouth. There is no doubt that doctors are concerned about their patients rather than their own skins. Doctors know that they will spend more time checking the accounts than checking their patients, more time looking for the cheap hospital instead of looking at each patient and deciding how to treat that person.

In my constituency, a meeting of the regional branch of the BMA attracted 200 doctors, which was almost a record; doctors do not always turn up at those meetings, as they are such busy people. Those doctors watched the video that has been produced by the Government—they have spent millions on that propaganda. Those doctors were so impressed by that video that they voted, almost unanimously, against the White Paper. The video is a waste of taxpayers' money. Those doctors were horrified by it. It is supposed to be subtle stuff, but the doctors understood it and they voted on a motion tantamount to resignation.

Local doctors are not thick; they understand the situation. They are not greedy; all they want is to be assured that everything will be all right for their patients.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does my hon. Friend agree that the argument that the doctors have been brainwashed by the BMA is a slur on doctors who have been in practice all their lives, often following their fathers and grandfathers? Such an argument implies that they cannot think for themselves.

Mr. Michie: My hon. Friend is correct. The only person who has been indoctrinated is the Secretary of State. He was not keen when he started off, but now he is convinced that his proposals will work. He has tried to reverse the argument by maintaining that doctors have been brainwashed.

Doctors are keen and dedicated. I have had my disagreements, political or otherwise, with my local doctors. On this occasion, however, we are not arguing about politics; that is why I was so annoyed with the Secretary of State when he tried to make it a political issue.

He tried to argue about what the Labour party would say rather than what doctors and others have said about the proposals.

I know that the Secretary of State has received a letter from one doctor in my constituency. At the end of that letter, the doctor says that the Secretary of State should resign, or change his mind; otherwise, he will resign. That doctor has not been indoctrinated in any way. He is a strong practising Christian in the community and he feels so strongly about the White Paper that he believes that the Secretary of State should give up his job or he will give up his.

When the Government decide to give us time for a major debate on the White Paper, I hope that they will think again. If they really believe that the White Paper is a marvellous idea, they should follow the advice in the Opposition motion—they should delay the changes for the time being and put them to the people at the next general election. If they do that, the Labour party will be home and dry.

6.34 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): My remarks are based on extensive consultation with many doctors who are practising in Gloucester and the Gloucestershire district, who are a highly professional and effective group of practitioners. The Gloucestershire district has one of the best patient-doctor ratios in the country and it has one of the lowest FPC average prescription costs. It also carries out a high percentage of cervical smears in comparison with other districts.

I hope that the Secretary of State will be able to confirm that, as a result of his proposals, such an area will not witness a relative outflow of funds. There may be other areas that need funds, but if the declared aim of the proposals is to bring the worst up to the standards of the best, that cannot be done unless the best retain all the funding that they already receive.

I acknowledge what my right hon. and learned Friend has said on other occasions: that the proposed new system will not force—I emphasise that word—doctors to take on more patients, and that their overriding aim will be to please patients so as to retain them. For many years, list sizes in the Gloucestershire district have been gradually reducing. They are now down to below 1,800, compared with the national average of 1,969. That does not mean that doctors are having an easy time, but it is one of the reasons for the district's good patient care figures. I believe that that evidence proves that there is a relationship between shorter lists and good patient care.

One of my chief anxieties is that there is an incentive within the new system to build up lists. I know that the new system can be presented in different ways, but I believe that that incentive exists. The doctor can make up his income from other services, but an increased list appears to be one way in which to do so. That would come about not because increased income is of paramount importance, but because increased income happens to be one result of larger lists. Therefore, the proposed system pulls in an opposite direction from shorter lists which, historically, have achieved good results in the Gloucestershire district. It is true that the reduced list may provide the lazy doctor with an easy life, but it also provides the hard-working, diligent doctor with the best possible opportunity to give his patients the best attention.

I have two comments to make about the capitation proposals. First, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) has already referred to the likely effect on the enlistment of women doctors who perform an important role, often in a part-time capacity. The White Paper makes reference to incentives for female doctors, but paragraph 47a of the new contract is far from clear on this matter. I want to be assured that the new arrangements will not mean women doctors failing to be offered appointments that might otherwise have been open to them. Secondly, there may be pressure against taking on new doctors who do not bring personal lists to a practice. When some doctors reach retirement, their posts may not be filled automatically by new doctors.

Although I have reservations about the greater emphasis on capitation as proposed in the new system, I support the emphasis on new services and the incentives to provide comprehensive services to the patient covering prevention and treatment. The emphasis on health promotion, disease prevention, screening and check-ups is welcome. I hope that the value put on services such as minor operations will be realistic and cover the initial outlay not only for the instruments that may be required, but for the costs of consumables. That figure should be based on a proper costing rather than on a subjective judgment about what figure may or may not be sufficient encouragement for a doctor to undertake an operation.

On other occasions, my right hon. and learned Friend has said that the targets that he has set for immunisation and cervical smear tests may be subject to some modification. In Gloucestershire, the number of women having cervical smears is greater than in any other district, but in some cases an 80 per cent. target would be unrealistic. In a practice in Gloucester city, 19 per cent. of the female patients aged between 35 and 65 have had a hysterectomy, 5 per cent. decided against the test, 6 per cent. failed to respond to letters and 14 per cent. are over the age of 70. It is hardly appropriate to apply such a percentage in that type of practice.

There has been much talk about doctors being available for consultation in the surgery for 20 hours a week. I find the opposition to that requirement less persuasive than the other points that have been made to me. There may be individual cases where it would cause hardship, but it seems illogical to be saying, on the one hand, that more time is needed with individual patients and, on the other, that 20 hours in the surgery is too much.

I believe that many of the proposals will enhance choice, competition, accountability and responsibility, and all those are to be welcomed. But the reservations I have mentioned will, I hope, be addressed by the Secretary of State before he reaches any final conclusions on the package to be adopted.

6.41 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): It is clear from the debate this afternoon that the Government have lost the argument—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members who have just drifted into the Chamber may care to know that only one Government Back Bencher, the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), unreservedly supported the Government's plans—*[Interruption.]* The day the Government pray in aid the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) is the day when they are really facing hard times selling their proposals.

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

It is clear that the concerns of the Government are completely different from the concerns of everybody else. The Government are talking about accounting, costing and pricing. Everyone else is talking about people, health and wellbeing. The Government are concerned about a healthy bank balance. Everyone else is concerned about a healthy patient.

The Government think that the major battle for the next century is to make the NHS cheaper. All their plans go towards achieving that. We and everyone else believe that the major battle is to make the NHS better and to move on to conquer the major killer diseases such as cancer and heart disease. The Tories simply do not understand. They think that doctors are interested only in money, because that is all that interests them.

The Government do not understand that they cannot bully and bribe their way out of this. By accusing the doctors, first, of stupidity—by saying, "They do not understand our plans"—and, secondly, of greediness, they have simply hardened the attitude of doctors and astounded the public. The Tories do not understand that they are up against a profound NHS culture which affects Tory voting doctors in the shires as much as it affects working class communities in inner cities. The Government will discover that on Thursday in the Vale of Glamorgan. They are badly out of touch with the popular pulse.

The Secretary of State cannot have it both ways. In his amendment to our motion he

"welcomes the widespread medical support for the objectives of the White Paper".

In his speech, however, he did little more than berate what he was pleased to describe as "the British Medical opposition."

Conservative Members cannot say that the doctors do not understand and that they are being led by the nose by their leaders. The BMA's general medical services committee sent to every GP reprints of every working paper as well as the general medical services committee's comments. The thoroughness with which the doctors went about their consultations stands in marked contrast with the total failure of the Government to carry out any consultations. Having failed to consult anyone, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) pointed out, they went on to spend over £1¼ million of taxpayers' money trying to persuade us that it is a good idea.

The Government must accept that it is not because doctors do not understand the plans that they are against them. They are against them because they understand them and do not like the way they will work. That must be clear to all Conservative Members when they read the letters that are swamping their postbags from local GPs.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Lady claims that by reading letters from GPs we become aware of their views. That is so, but most of the letters I have received show that the GPs in question have not read the detailed working papers properly *—[Interruption.]*—and that some of them are listening to the sort of propaganda that the hon. Lady has been sending to weekly newspapers such as I have in my constituency suggesting that, in some way, my local hospital will be opted out. She and many of her colleagues are responsible for the disinformation that is currently being disseminated.

Ms. Harman: I challenge the hon. Gentleman to send me copies of letters he has received from GPs whom he claims have not read the working papers and do not understand what is proposed in the White Paper. We shall then be able to see whether what he says is simply bluff and bluster.

The message from every independent medical organisation is twofold—that the plans will harm patients and that the timetable for their implementation is wildly unrealistic. Even the American professor who is credited with thinking up some of these proposals cannot understand why they are not being preceded by pilot schemes and believes that the Government are attempting to implement them with amazing speed.

Five out of six of the consultant teams who have pioneered the resource management initiative have rejected the timetable for opt-out because they say that they—the front line, the six leaders—will not be ready, and the sixth is Guy's hospital, where profound concern exists because of the feeling that they are being steamrollered into opt-out.

The pressure on hospital consultants to support opting out has been shameful. It has been a disgraceful combination of bribery and blackmail along the lines of, "If you are good boys and girls and among the first to opt out, we will see you all right, but if you do not, we will leave you to sink under your budget deficits." That is disgraceful and senior consultants are up in arms about being subjected to that sort of treatment.

The working paper on capital charges sets out the small print about which the BMA has warned consultants—the small print that the Government opt-out salesmen never mention. The Secretary of State talks a great deal about medical audit, but there is only a thin working paper on that saying, basically, "The chaps have thought up medical audit. It is clearly a good idea for the chaps to get on with it." There is little substance in that working paper. The fattest working paper is about capital charges—the "more work for accountants" paper—and it is clear that the Government have really thought about that, though the opt-out salesmen never mention it.

When the Secretary of State decides that a hospital will opt out—and the decision will be his and not that of the hospital—the hospital will take with it into independence all of its debts for its land, buildings and equipment, on which it will have to pay full rates of interest.

St. Thomas's, across the river, estimates that this will mean it having to pay the Treasury about £40 million a year extra. Guy's, a mile or so down the river, will have to pay an extra £27 million a year. This is pressure for the greatest asset-strip of all time. London hospitals in particular, because land values are so high, will simply close down, sell up and move out, leaving the sites of our great London hospitals—*[Interruption]* I challenge the Secretary of State to deny that, if it is not the case. The sites of our great London hospitals will be snapped up for offices or luxury riverside apartments.

Department of Health officials have already said that two fifths of hospital sites will be sold in this great asset-strip. Conservative Members should read the information that the Department has disseminated. The effect of the capital charges is that opting out for many is likely to spell financial suicide rather than financial freedom.

The Government have said that their plans will increase choice. In fact, choice will be reduced. What choice will

there be for the patient of a GP budget-holder? The patient will have no choice of hospital for tests or treatment because the decision will have been made at the start of the year by the GP negotiating contracts for bulk buys of certain operations and treatments. Those negotiations will take place at the beginning of the year, probably long before the patient has got ill, let alone walked into the surgery. There will be no choice for the patient of a GP budget-holder.

There will be even less choice for the patient of a GP who is not a budget-holder. The decision on where that patient will go if in need of hospital tests or treatment will not rest with the GP but will be made at the start of the year by health authority managers who never see the patient. They will make a decision based on cost. They will get the cheapest buy. There is no requirement for them to get the approval of local GPs before contracts are placed. Managers who are not recruited or trained to know anything about clinical standards will make decisions on the basis of cost for patients whom they never see.

That is the absolute opposite of the Prime Minister's wish for treatment at the time of her choice, in the hospital of her choice. Under the NHS as she plans it, the patient will get the hospital of a manager's choice, at the place of the manager's choice and at the cheapest cost. No doubt the Government hope that that will join waiting lists as another powerful incentive for patients to go private and will drive patients out of the NHS.

Despite what the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) asked the Secretary of State about, there will be less choice for patients who are elderly or who have long-term illnesses because, as the Royal College of Nursing so aptly described it, for the first time every patient will have a price tag on his head and for the first time doctors will have a financial disincentive to take on to their lists patients who will be expensive in requiring drugs or hospital treatment.

The right to choose a GP is not matched anywhere in the White Paper or in the working papers by a right to be accepted by that GP. The GP could say that his list was full. How will the Government police that? GPs will not refuse to take on more patients because they are lazy or heartless but because, with cash limits, they will have to balance the resources available for existing patients against the demands of future patients.

The greatest cheek is for the Government to offer us a choice that we already have—the chance of travelling hundreds of miles away from home to get treatment. We already have the possibility of travelling across boundaries, but people do not often do that because no one in his right mind wants to travel hundreds of miles to get treatment. What happens if there is a problem and the patient is stranded at the hospital? What happens if there is a need for post-operative care and the patient is unable to go back easily to that hospital?

The Government do not understand those arguments because they are about the patient and not about cost. The Government think only of the cost and never of the patient. GPs have seen what fierce spending limits have done to patients waiting for hospital treatment. They do not relish cash limits on GP services. Despite the fact that only last week the Secretary of State was still asserting that there will not be cash limits, it is clear from the working papers, and clear already from the Health and Medicines Act 1988, that cash limits on GP services are planned.

The White Paper says that GP budgets will not be underwritten for what are described as too high referral rates. The Government have no idea what a too high or a too low referral rate is. What is needed is not an average referral rate but appropriate referral decisions. The Government do not see that because they are considering not the quality of decisions but only the cost. The same is true of prescribing patterns. The Government are using the blunt instrument of cash limits when they should be using the instrument of training and education.

The Government have said that they have no plans to allow topping-up by patients of GP practice budgets but, if the proposals go ahead, that is inevitable. Even if we do not have the scenario of an individual patient handing over a bundle of notes to back up his demand to go to a particular hospital, we shall see groups of patients getting together for voluntary fund-raising for their own practice to get equipment for a new play area or new reception facilities. In the better-off areas that will free more money for hospital referrals.

The health divide that has already been referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) will widen. The patients who need most health care will probably get inferior care and the well-off surgeries will depend on their communities to put their hands in their pockets to finance them in the face of cash limiting. That is how communities have responded when hospitals have been cash-limited. We have already seen that skew the service on the basis of hospitals providing what they think they can get money for rather than what they know the community needs.

The Secretary of State is beginning to look as though he is in as bad shape as his predecessor. He cannot blunder on with his plans because of the weight of public and professional opinion that is so heavily against him. If he falls forward, the doctors, assisted by the public, will get him; if he falls backward, the Prime Minister will get him. Conservative Members should listen to their constituents and to the doctors rather than deride them. Hon. Members have a chance to tell the Government this evening that they cannot press on with their plans before the next general election. They have no mandate to destroy the Health Service. I hope that Conservative Members will join us in voting for the motion.

6.54 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: With the leave of the House, I assure hon. Members that I shall speak briefly so that I shall not intrude into the time for the debate on education; that means that I shall not follow the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) into the things that she said about the hospital service. I shall reserve my reply for the full debate on the White Paper.

As I am short of time, let me take it at face value that the hon. Lady is interested in producing a better National Health Service. When we debate the proposals for self-governing hospitals and when she sees the expressions of interest that come forward, we will be able to debate the subject more seriously. Those expressions of interest will be taken for what they are described as—expressions of interest with a great deal of detail left to be considered by all in the hospitals concerned or by anyone who wants to commit himself to the proposals. People will want to know, for example, exactly what capital charges will mean for their hospital and for every other hospital in which the

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

system is being introduced. I reassure the hon. Lady that nonsense about all our great hospitals in London being sold for office blocks is wide of the mark.

Ms. Harman: Two fifths.

Mr. Clarke: Even the suggestion that two fifths of hospitals in London will be sold to property developers for office blocks is very wide of the mark. When we get to the sensible discussions, I hope that that childish parody of our proposals is abandoned and that we can talk about how hospitals which have management in their own hands can contribute to the care of patients.

Most of the debate has been about general practitioners. There was a great deal of letter-reading on all sides. I shall not go as far as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) who read into the record more of his constituents' letters in 10 minutes than I have ever heard any hon. Member do before. As we were challenged to produce letters, I cannot resist producing just one from a professor in the department of general practice and primary care in a great London teaching hospital not far from the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I shall quote just two paragraphs:

"I am in constant contact with several hundred practices scattered over the United Kingdom and it appears that there is a consensus which is not reflected in public statements, and which is positive.

The general feeling is one that the reorganisation is long overdue and that the efficiency of the Health Service has to be materially improved. There is also a considerable welcome for the beginnings of integration of general practice with secondary care."

I too have a sheaf of letters. I could go on quoting consultants and GPs from all over the country.

My hon. Friends keep producing the views of their doctors. We are taking note of those and other views. I was asked by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) whether we have over the years considered other possibilities. It is not true that the idea of improving the contract for general practice is an overnight thought that occurred during the Prime Minister's review. Discussions go back five or six years. The hon. Member and my hon. Friend quoted other views and asked whether we had considered other options.

I have not read the recent letter of Professor Morell, but it sounds as though he was commending the idea of a good practice allowance as a feature of a contract based on medical audit. We were discussing that five or six years ago. I remember it well. It was rejected because of medical opposition, which was organised and very strong. Because it was thought that the whole idea of clinical audit and peer review would be jeopardised if linked to payment, we turned away from that and considered other methods of evolving an acceptable contract that reflected the aims to which the Government remain committed—rewarding those doctors who work hardest and best, setting new standards for the introduction of services, particularly in health promotion and disease prevention, and setting new targets for services such as immunisation, screening and so on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) pressed all the points made by her general practitioners upon me without reading them into *Hansard*, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East did. Contrary to what was said, she and my hon. Friends the Members for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and for Gloucester (Mr. French) seemed to support the principles behind the White Paper. They wished to take up particular points that general practitioners had put to them about the present state of the contract discussions.

I would welcome a resumption of those discussions. They had been going on for a long time and were broken off at the behest of the negotiators while the conference was held last week. That conference lifted the threat of resignations and began to talk of discussions again and how those discussions should be renewed. I have made it clear throughout that, as long as we reach a conclusion soon at the end of a six-year process, I am prepared to seek to reach agreement on a form of contract with doctors, so long as they demonstrate to me that their negotiators share the aims that I have just enunciated.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): As my right hon. and learned Friend is prepared to put forward proposals with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, which seem broadly to meet general practitioners' requirements, now that the conference is over, is it his intention to meet the English general practitioners and to anglicise those proposals?

Mr. Clarke: I do not want to take the discussions much further on the Floor of the House. The Scottish contract, the so-called tartan contract, was put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to represent particularly Scottish problems a few weeks after I had put forward my English proposals. We both took account of the views put to us in producing the Scottish contract. I shall be interested to hear whether general practitioners in Northampton and elsewhere will be interested in accepting what the Scots have so far on offer. I shall be interested to hear whether Scottish general practitioners are content with the tartan contract. No doubt the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) knows.

Various matters have been raised about which I cannot go into detail here. My hon. Friends the Members for Harlow and for Newbury asked about rural practice. I am perfectly content to continue to discuss the rather curious disagreement between us on rural practice. My negotiators and the BMA negotiators are determined that there must be some special arrangements for rural practice. In discussions so far we have both been convinced that our respective suggestions are better and fairer for those who live in rural areas and scattered districts, but, as we are both agreed that special arrangements have to be made for rural areas, it must be possible to reach agreement.

A similar situation applies to deprived inner-city areas. I have been proposing extra capitation for those who practise in deprived areas because, again, general practitioners there cannot build up their lists. There has been no pressure in our contract proposals on any general practitioner with average or near-average lists to raise his list size, which is a fear that has been voiced. Other fears can also be met in discussion.

I was asked about the position of women practitioners by my hon. Friends the Members for Newbury and for Gloucester and by Opposition Members. The nature of general practice will change in many ways. One is that many more practitioners will be women. More than half

the students in our medical schools now are women and we must accept that equal opportunities must be presented to all women who go into general practice, including those who will have family responsibilities at some time or another. The contract proposals are friendly to women seeking to enter general practice.

The notion of job sharing is floated in my proposals, as is the idea of part-time women being full principals in a practice. Therefore, the differences between me and my negotiators on the one hand and some women general practitioners on the other are not differences of aim; they are based on what I regard as an unusual interpretation of some of the changes that we are making to basic practice allowance. I am prepared to talk through a contract which in the end will encourage more women to go into practice and accept a desirable change in the contract.

I mention those matters not to trail any further what we might discuss, but to make it clear that discussions were broken off only because the BMA asked for that. The BMA carried out a leaflet campaign and held its conference, and, as far as I am concerned, discussions can now be resumed. My proposals were evolved after 12 months of detailed discussions, but they were plainly open to further discussions. That is the way that we should proceed. If both sides show common sense and are genuinely committed to a better NHS, raising standards of general practice and improving service to the patient, it should be possible to reach agreement. The remuneration of individual general practitioners should not be the great stumbling block to progress. Other reforms should not be regarded as sanctions where consent can be withheld unless a proper deal on the contract is arrived at.

The contract should now be resolved by sensible discussion, and further examination of the White Paper will reveal what my hon. Friends have all said has been revealed in sensible discussions with small groups of doctors throughout Britain—that, on balance, almost all agree that it is beneficial. When details are explained, most general practitioners will agree that. As we proceed with the implementation, it will be seen that this is just the next step in the Government's commitment to a better NHS, a free NHS financed out of taxation, and one that keeps up with the times to deliver the best of modern medical practice to patients who will be proud of it in the future.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 279.

Division No. 182] **[7.05 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David

Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the widespread medical support for the objectives of the White Paper "Working for Patients" and believes that the proposals in that White Paper will enable the health service and individual doctors to respond better to the needs and wishes of patients, extend patient choice, delegate responsibility to where the services are provided and secure the best value for money; affirms its support for the basic principles of the National Health Service which will be strengthened by the early implementation of the White Paper proposals; and looks forward to the constructive contributions from medical organisations to achieve that.

Teacher Shortages

7.19 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House, noting the widespread evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, local education authorities, and many others, of severe and ever growing teacher shortages in many parts of the country, and in many subjects, and a low teacher morale across the country, condemns Her Majesty's Government for its complacency and its failure to take effective measures to reduce teacher shortages, or to raise the morale of the teaching profession, without which the delivery of the national curriculum educational standards and the provision of greater opportunities for children may be put at grave risk.

The quality of education that children receive can only be as good as the teachers who provide it. That has been true at all times, but the need for teachers to be of the highest quality has never been greater than it is today.

After 10 years of the present Government standards of education have faltered, as last year's Select Committee report showed. We are losing out internationally: Britain now spends a lower proportion of its national wealth on education than it did a decade ago. Capital spending dropped by 27 per cent. between 1981 and 1988. Central Government current investment in education has been cut by 18 per cent. in real terms, leaving local authorities and ratepayers to make up the difference. There is a £3 billion backlog of repairs. Half our children are educated in sub-standard accommodation, a quarter in classrooms so bad that the physical conditions are affecting their education. Fewer than one in three of our 16-year-olds stay on in full-time education, compared with two in three in France, Japan and the United States.

After 10 years of neglect by the Government there is an overwhelming need to raise standards of education and achievement, especially for the 80 per cent. of pupils who do not follow the A-level route to university or to a first degree. That is challenge enough for our teaching force, but on top of that challenge—and the challenge that teachers have already had to meet with GCSE—come the new demands for even greater skill and dedication: the demands requiring teachers to cope with the local management of schools, which will alter fundamentally the way in which schools are administered, and the demands on them to cope with the national curriculum and the associated systems of assessment and testing.

That is the challenge; what is the reality? The reality today is a teacher supply crisis. In many areas and many subjects, there are not enough properly qualified teachers in post. In some areas there are not even enough teachers, and children are having to be sent home. With the present policies, the crisis will become worse as the demographic time bomb explodes. The age group from which new young teachers are recruited will decline by 25 per cent. between now and 1995. On some estimates, the percentage of new graduates needed in teaching would have to rise from 11 per cent. today to 30 per cent. in five years' time just to meet the demand for new teachers. While the available pool of new teachers shrinks, the school population will rise.

No one, I believe, disagrees with the claim that teacher supply is in crisis. Wastage is so high that, as the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay has commented, 3,000 newly qualified teachers do not go into teaching at all; and, on the Minister of State's own figures, 28 per cent. of those who do—nearly three in 10—leave within five years and stay out of teaching altogether.

Evidence of the teacher supply crisis comes—yes—from the Government's opponents. It comes from the teaching unions, from Labour local authorities and from the parliamentary Labour party, which conducted its own survey of teacher shortages. But it also comes from those whose job is to advise the Government—from the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay, under the chairmanship of Lord Chilver, from Her Majesty's inspectorate and from Conservative local education authorities. It also comes from those who represent a group that the Government claim to be empowering—parents—and from the daily experience of any of us who visit state schools and talk to those in them who are responsible for delivering the curriculum.

The evidence is overwhelming. The interim advisory committee report said that recruitment was

"worryingly below the Secretary of State's own target for secondary courses in mathematics, science, technology and (to a lesser extent) modern languages. . . We recognise that there are currently a range of initiatives underway to tackle these difficulties, but the task remains enormous. . . We continue to be impressed by teachers' commitment and their high professional standards; but morale appears to be as low as we judged it to be last year."

Then there is the evidence of Her Majesty's inspectorate in the report "Standards in Education". The report says:

"primary education is critically short of teachers with expertise in science, technology and mathematics."

On secondary schools, the report says:

"In areas where the cost of living is highest, such as the inner and outer London Boroughs and the home counties, recruiting teachers is an ever-growing problem and some schools are becoming more and more dependent on probationary and temporary teachers. Specialist teacher shortages are most severe in mathematics, science and craft, design and technology (CDT)."

The Elton report made a similar point about the problems of low motivation and shortages.

And so it goes on. I understand that no one has told the Select Committee in its recent inquiry that teacher shortages are not causing a problem: no one, that is, except the Government. The response of the Minister of State to all that evidence and more has been to describe it as a myth. Speaking to the Secondary Heads Association conference two weeks ago, the Minister said:

"We really do need. . .to nail this myth that teaching has difficulty in securing recruits and in retaining them when it does secure them."

Let me ask the Minister a few questions about that myth. Did Her Majesty's inspectorate and the interim advisory committee invent their conclusions? Why—as a withering editorial in last week's *Times Educational Supplement* asked—are there 20 per cent. more job advertisements in the TES than there were at this time last year? As the paper commented:

"If there is no shortage, there is certainly a remarkably energetic hunt for teachers to make good the shortage which doesn't exist."

What about the evidence from the Prime Minister's London borough of Barnet? A report from the chief education officer shows a near trebling of resignations in the past seven years. In secondary education the number of teachers resigning has risen from 7 per cent. six years ago to 18 per cent. last year, and in primary education it has risen from 5 per cent. six years ago to 14 per cent. last year.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): If the position is as the hon. Gentleman describes, will he come out firmly in favour of licensed teachers in his speech?

Mr. Straw: No. I shall explain to the hon. Gentleman exactly why I do not believe that lowering standards for teachers will solve the problems.

The report from the Prime Minister's own Conservative authority spells out just what great strains the shortages are imposing on teachers in the borough, and how they are reflected in shortages in other Conservative boroughs such as Harrow, Havering and Redbridge—shortages that in many instances are as bad as, or worse than, those in Labour authorities.

What about the figures that show consistently that the Government have failed to hit the targets that they have set for recruitment to training in shortage subjects? According to the interim advisory committee, the number of applicants for mathematics courses last year was down to 27 per cent. below the target. For physics the figure was 23 per cent., for CDT 21 per cent., for modern languages 13 per cent. and for chemistry 42 per cent. Yet the Minister of State tells us that the shortages are all a myth.

Let me quote the latest figures from the graduate teacher training registry comparing this year's applicants with last year's. They show a 2 per cent. decline in applicants for biology, a 17 per cent. decline for mathematics and a 24 per cent. decline for physics.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does the hon. Gentlemen agree that the shortages to which he has referred are essentially a regional problem, as is shown by the written answer reported in column *326* of *Hansard* on 20 January 1989? As they are a regional problem, does the hon. Gentleman agree with regional pay bargaining?

Mr. Straw: No, I do not. If Conservative Members read the IAC reports for this year and last year, they will see that the committee, under the chairmanship of the Conservative Lord Chilver, considered that question and came down against regional pay for reasons which they set out.

If there is no problem—if it is all a myth—why are private schools now facing teacher shortages for the first time? Why is the Secretary of State agreeing that city technology colleges should pay their teachers 5 per cent. more than national pay scales, simply to recruit teachers?

The Minister of State says that it is all a myth. However, the Secretary of State is not that crude; his line has been different. He says that there has been a slight problem. However, in another orgy of self-congratulation, he claims to be tackling the problem with vigorous and effective measures. As ever, these measures are principally cosmetic. Of course, we should expect no more than cosmetics from a man who once worked as a consultant to Avon Cosmetics Limited. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) looks embarrassed, but it is a fact that the Secretary of State once worked for Avon Cosmetics. That occupation fits the man, because most of the measures that he has brought forward are cosmetic and will not solve the problem.

There are major shortages of teachers in many parts of the country and in many subjects, and the position will get worse. On the best assumptions of the Secretary of State's own Department there will be a shortfall of 1,000 maths teachers, 1,500 physics teachers, 2,000 chemistry teachers, 2,000 music teachers, 2,500 modern language teachers, and 6,000 teachers of craft, design and technology. Since those shortages will not be evenly spread, but will be concentrated, in some respects randomly, in particular schools and particular areas, the figures from the Secretary of State's own Department mean that in some schools there will not be sufficient teachers to deliver key subjects of the national curriculum.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) intervened about shortages. Does the experience of my hon. Friend confirm my own, which is that inevitably, in inner city areas, even outside the south-east—and we accept that there is a particular shortage problem in the south-east—because teaching is more difficult and demoralising, shortages are beginning to appear at a high level in Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and so on?

Mr. Straw: I accept what my hon. Friend says, but I also make the point that shortages, as the Labour party's survey showed, are spreading across subjects and across the country. The figures I have quoted from the Department's evidence to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts are almost certainly an underestimate of the likely shortages by 1995, based, as they are, on unsupportable assumptions, such as a 20 per cent. increase in target levels in training for physics, maths, technology, and modern languages, when the existing targets of 20 per cent. below that have never been reached except in one subject in one year in the past three years.

To all these problems, the Secretary of State has no effective policy response for his proposal for licensed teachers. That proposal raises the greatest suspicion that the Government will solve the problem of teacher shortages by bringing in sub-standard teachers on the cheap. I have made it clear that we favour a number of methods of entry to teacher training. None of us believes that the present structure of B Eds and postgraduate certificates of education should last for ever. If it is accepted that a high quality profession is needed to meet the challenges of the 1990s, it is madness to depress the standards and level of qualification below the graduate standard which has so painstakingly been reached for entry into the profession.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that for many years local education authorities have employed instructors who have not had the same academic qualifications as qualified teachers? They have employed instructors in CDT, home economics and other spheres who have been excellent teachers. As a result of using these people, we have been able to staff many departments. Will the hon. Gentleman not insult these people?

Mr. Straw: Of course, I am aware that the local authorities have had instructors, but no one has pretended, least of all the instructors, that they are qualified graduate teachers. What is now proposed is that people who are instructors, as it were, should become qualified graduate teachers without training. We have not had from this Government proposals for licensed doctors or nurses, but apparently the education—not of the children of the Secretary of State or of Cabinet members—of our children is to be left to people who are underqualified or unqualified.

I ask the Secretary of State whether the licensed teacher system will produce teachers of graduate status and standard. If so, will the teachers get a degree, and who will validate it? How will the system operate? This afternoon, I asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, "Since the Secretary of State has said that all that is needed to go on to this licensed teacher scheme is a two-year experience of higher education, does that not mean that someone who has been in college for two years, following a Bachelor of Education or a PGCE but has failed his teaching practice, may be admitted to a licensed teacher scheme?" The Minister could not answer the question this afternoon, but perhaps the Secretary of State can answer it this evening.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, instead of looking at this licensing system, perhaps the Secretary of State might look at a suggestion made by one of my constituents who is a teacher-trainer and who suggests that, instead of having one intake on PGCE courses in a year, there should be two intakes, one in the summer and one midway through the year, so that the supply of trained teachers could be increased considerably within any given year?

Mr. Straw: That is the kind of suggestion which the Government should examine to introduce greater flexibility, with different entry routes into teaching but the same graduate exit route. Reference has been made to licensed teacher status. I will quote the favourite teacher trade union of the Secretary of State—not the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers or the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, but the Professional Association of Teachers whose general secretary, Mr. Peter Dawson, wrote to me about the licensed teacher scheme and authorised me to quote from his letter. He wrote:

"My comment concerns the introduction of licensed teachers. We think the proposals might very well help to overcome teacher shortages, if only we knew what they were. Time and time again, we have raised with Kenneth Baker the question of where the training is actually to come in on-the-job training arrangements. No kind of answer that makes any sense has yet been received. One is left with the impression that it is not so much on-the-job training that we are going to get but on-the-job sinking or swimming. Writing government policy on the back of a menu over dinner is all very well, but it does call for further thought next morning . . . We are still waiting for Kenneth Baker to complete his licensed teacher proposals. Perhaps he has forgotten."

I hope that the Secretary of State will provide us with a bit more detail about how the licensed teacher scheme will operate and whether it will produce teachers of a graduate standard. If they are to be graduates, will they get degrees and how will they be validated?

For about four months, I have been pressing the Secretary of State to publish the secondary schools staffing survey. After a number of parliamentary questions, he promised that it would be made available at the end of April. It was made available at 6.15 this evening. I am not surprised that the Secretary of State has done his best to sit on it, because the secondary staffing survey of 1988 shows that the situation, compared with 1974, is worsening. It shows that the proportion of teachers teaching their particular subjects who do not have a post A-level qualification in that subject has increased since 1984 from 51 to 53 per cent. In details about long-term absences, it shows that, in the survey week, 55 per cent. of schools were affected by long-term teacher absences, on top of 96 per cent. affected by short-term teacher absence. Of those absences the principal cause was not, as Conservative Members have pretended, that teachers were undertaking in-service training courses, which accounted for only 32 per cent. In fact, 70 per cent. were absent for other reasons. The other reasons are not given, and perhaps the Secretary of State has more details, but I suggest that the other reasons have to do with teacher shortages. The survey also shows that, in the survey week, 52 per cent. of schools were affected by vacancies.

The Government's record on teachers has been one of complacency, neglect and abuse. Pay is by no means everything but, as the interim advisory committee said, it is doubtful whether the pay level it recommended, constrained as it was by the Treasury, would

"secure the requisite degree of motivation among the generality of teachers at this crucial time."

The dedication of teachers is high, but morale is low and has not been helped by the Secretary of State's refusal so far to restore collective bargaining rights to teacher unions.

There is, however, a central problem that goes beyond pay and conditions. It lies at the heart of the teacher shortage crisis. Teachers are not valued by the Government. Instead, teachers have been used as an easy butt. They have been used and abused by the Conservative Right as a convenient excuse for explaining away the Government's failure to invest in our children.

Take, for example, the now notorious letter to local education authorities from the Department of Education and Science, giving them advice on who should be invited to the Buckingham palace reception and garden party to celebrate 150 years of state education. The letter said:

"They must be people likely to behave properly and bring credit to their particular aspect of the education service."

When all this came out—but not before—the Secretary of State said that he had not written the letter but that he regretted it. He did not say that he was sorry; he said that he regretted it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Are they not the same thing?

Mr. Straw: No, they are not.

The Secretary of State is responsible for the generation of the climate in which, to quote the report of his own chief inspector:

"too many teachers feel that their profession and its work are misjudged and seriously undervalued."

The Secretary of State says that teacher shortages are a myth and that his measures are effective.

Let me read finally from a letter that I received last week from a constituent. It says:

"Dear Mr. Straw,

I thought that you might be interested to learn that my husband and I will be taking up teaching posts"

abroad

"from 1st September 1989. We are both regarded as valuable and experienced members of staff in our respective schools, but have found the deteriorating conditions, the increasing workloads and paltry pay rises unacceptable. Between us we have almost thirty years experience, but can see no way forward . . . We are not moving for the money"

but

"our conditions of service will be far superior and we think that our efforts will be better appreciated. At least we will not have to listen to Baker constantly telling us how incompetent and inadequate we are!"

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Where are they going?

Mr. Straw: They are going to teach in the Third world—in the Dominican Republic. They happen to believe that their conditions in the Dominican Republic will be better than they are in Bradford.

There are serious teacher shortages. There is a crisis of recruitment, retention and morale of good quality teachers. That crisis can and will only get worse until we have a Government who are committed to our state education service and who are willing properly to invest in this nation's children—our future.

7.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'notes the importance of recruiting sufficient well qualified teachers, in particular for the implementation of the national curriculum; welcomes the vigorous measures which the Government has introduced to this end; welcomes the clear indication of the success of these measures; welcomes the measures the Government is taking to make teacher training more rigorous, more practical and more responsive to the needs of schools; and commends the Government's intention to continue to take whatever action is needed to ensure a continuing supply of high quality teachers.'.

I welcome this debate. I am glad to have this opportunity to put on record what we have done, what we are doing and what we intend to do to counter the problem of teacher shortages.

First, I should like to pay tribute to the teaching profession and to the many good teachers that we have in our schools. Theirs is a responsible and challenging job. Teaching is not easy. Not everybody can do it. However, teaching is an attractive and rewarding career. That is why people are coming forward in increasing numbers to train as teachers. That is why we have many first-class teachers in our schools. I am confident that all hon. Members will want to join me in paying tribute to them.

I listened carefully to the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), but, as far as I am aware, he made no concrete suggestion for dealing with the shortage that he delineated. I shall therefore start with a few facts. There are more teachers relative to pupils than ever before. The overall pupil to teacher ratio, at 17:1, is at its lowest ever. The proportion of large classes has come down over the last 10 years. The proportion of pupils taught in classes of 31 or more has fallen by nearly 12 percentage points in primary schools and by nearly 9 percentage points in secondary schools. Some 25,000 teachers enter or re-enter the profession each year. Less than 1 per cent. of teachers leave the profession for other paid employment.

Recruitment to initial teacher training was a record in 1988—up by 5 per cent. over 1987. In primary, it was particularly good—12 per cent. up. The level of applications for initial training, starting in September of this year, is even higher. In primary it is up by 14 per cent. over the same time in 1988. In secondary, it is also up—by 1 per cent. Another indication of the popularity of teaching is that 10 per cent. of all graduates qualify as teachers.

The background—the overall picture—is encouraging. There is no shortage of people wanting to be teachers, yet there are teacher shortages in certain areas and in certain subjects, particularly maths and science. I must tell the House that there has never been a sufficient number of good, well-qualified teachers of maths and science. Even 10 years ago, when there were some 9,000 unemployed teachers, there were not enough maths and science teachers.

The problem is not, however, confined to teaching. The engineering and electronics industries complain of shortages of people with maths and science qualifications. As fast as the education system can produce such people, they are snapped up. We need to increase the number of young people leaving school who are educated to advanced level in maths and science subjects. Anybody who has read Corelli Barnett's "The Audit of War" will know that that is a long-term and enduring problem that has affected our country for the better part of this century. It is something to which I know all hon. Members will wish to give the highest priority.

That is why the national curriculum is so important. In future, every youngster will have to take science—which will include physics and chemistry, not just biology—and technology up to the age of 16. Many more youngsters than now will have the opportunity to go on to A-levels and AS-levels, which makes it even more important to ensure that our schools get the teachers that they need.

I hope the House recognises from what I have said that the question of teacher supply is a complex one. It is also of fundamental importance.

Of course I realise that the overall figures that I have given—the global picture—are of little comfort when a particular school cannot find a particular teacher to teach a particular subject. I accept that. Three years ago, therefore, I set out my proposals for an action programme. The hon. Member for Blackburn asked me whether I am tackling the problem of teacher shortages. Clearly it does not suit his purpose to take yes for an answer. I remind the House that I have backed up the action programme that I set up over three years ago with expenditure, so far, of over £50 million.

Since I launched the action programme, the regional dimension of teacher shortages has changed. I think that hon. Members in all parts of the House now recognise that fact. It was recognised during the interventions in the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn. There are particular problems in recruiting both secondary and primary teachers in London and the south-east. In my memorandum to the Select Committee, I showed how I was taking action to counter the problems as they developed.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The right hon. Gentleman has just told us about an action programme that he set up three years ago. I am on the Select Committee to which he referred. Why is it that every group that gave evidence to the Select Committee here and every group that gave evidence to us when we made visits described the shortage as a looming crisis? Will he explain why there is such a crisis after putting in hand an action programme? In three years it ought surely to have borne some fruit.

Mr. Baker: May I ask the hon. Gentleman to wait for a few moments? I shall answer his question when I deal with the action programmes that I have put in hand and with the ones that I intend to put in hand.

This is a serious issue. I am sometimes accused of being complacent, of doing nothing. That is an uncharacteristic

accusation to level against me. I am not known for doing nothing. I brought the issue on to the public agenda, I am taking action, and I shall continue to take action.

May I deal with the five specific areas where I have taken action, or where I shall be taking action? The first relates to the number of new places for initial teacher training. Last Friday, I announced that the intake numbers to initial teacher training courses for 1990-91 in England and Wales would be increased. There will be an extra 2,000 places in 1990 over and above 1989.

As regards the spread of those increases, there is an overall increase of 9½ per cent. above the 1989 target, 34 per cent. in modern languages, 15 per cent. in science, 10 per cent. in craft, design and technology and 11 per cent. in maths. This means the teacher training institutions will have the money to recruit and train more students in these subjects. We have also set aside 450 places for new ideas for types of courses in modern languages, music and chemistry. We did this in 1987 and 1988 for new courses in science and maths, which has led to some new good ideas for courses aimed at new target groups of students.

The first need, as I think is recognised, is to attract new young people into the teaching profession. Apart from increasing the number of teaching places in 1990, to reinforce the attractions of teaching in the shortage subjects I introduced the bursary scheme. The bursary is tax-free, non-means-tested and is now worth £1,300. It is available for those students who wish to take a postgraduate certificate of education course—that is, one year extra at college—after they have graduated. The scheme was originally for trainees in maths, physics and CDT, and it has been successful in reversing the declining trend of recruitment to these declining subjects.

In 1985, there was a clear decline in CDT, and there were just 452 people coming forward for PGCE. That is now up to 764. The total in these three subjects—maths, physics and CDT—was about 1,685; it is now 2,400 a year. This shows that these bursaries are attractive, as one would expect.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the Secretary of State not accept, however, that the bursary scheme has been of minimal impact, not least because in some of the areas where it was intended to act as a remedy—for example, physics—it has fallen far below its target of achievement, as the Secretary of State and his Ministers have accepted across the Dispatch Box in this House?

Mr. Baker: It arrested a decline. There was a rapid decline in these three subjects. Taking physics, the figure in 1985 was 273; in 1988, it was 456. I am not satisfied with that figure. We need more teachers in these areas, so earlier this year I extended the scheme to chemistry. When I made my announcement on 27 January applications for chemistry were 27 per cent. down over the same time last year. The House, I know, will welcome the news that applications are now 5 per cent. up over this time last year. This is a considerable improvement. It shows that my bursary scheme is working, and there is little doubt that without it there would be far fewer students in shortage areas.

I turn now to mismatch, which I know is recognised by members of the Select Committee. By that I mean teachers trained in one subject teaching another—teachers of biology, for example, teaching physics or perhaps teachers of maths taking computer studies. Some examples of mismatch are more serious than others. However, there is no doubt that there are too many teachers of some subjects and not enough of others. This is brought out well in the staffing survey which I published this evening, from which the hon. Member for Blackburn quoted, and he is quite right that mismatch has increased slightly between 1984 and 1988.

However, the survey indicates that the increase was not due to an aggregate shortfall in teacher supply, or to a fall in teachers with qualifications in shortage subjects; figures for physics, chemistry and CDT all increased, and percentages in maths have barely changed. Rather, the mismatch has arisen probably because of difficulties of deployment, which are greater during a period of falling rolls. Shortage subjects were not particularly affected; indeed, mismatch was unchanged in maths and down in CDT.

There is no doubt, as I said, that there are too many teachers of some subjects and not enough of others. The situation can be improved considerably by means of in-service training. I have devoted £35·5 million over two years to support in-service training in shortage subjects. That is a substantial sum of money. I have placed in the Library today the key results of the secondary staffing survey. These show that mismatch continues to be a problem. I urge authorities and schools to continue to make use of in-service training support to counter mismatch.

An interesting finding of the staffing survey shows that the implementation of the national curriculum for a reasonable time in September in secondary schools from years one to three will not greatly change the pattern of curriculum provision in those schools. That is, of course, only to be expected, as the national curriculum builds on existing best practice.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State spoke about the relatively limited impact of the national curriculum in years one to three. What about years four and five?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman picked up the cue from his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). I heard it myself. The position on years four and five is certainly more complex, because we will then require more young people to take science, modern languages and CDT up to the age of 16. This is a problem we are trying to address.

I find it staggering that Opposition Front Bench Members have no ideas whatsoever. As the ventriloquist was cued by the hon. Member who will wind up, I hope we will have a stunning list of proposals and ideas as to how teacher supply can be increased.

I next deal with the other important source of recruitment to the teaching profession, which is re-entrants —former teachers seeking to come back into the profession. I emphasise the importance of former teachers already returning to teaching in considerable numbers: over half of new teaching appointments are taken by returning teachers. We must try to maintain and, if we can, increase this important source of recruits to teaching. There are some excellent and effective examples of measures aimed at returners: the "keep in touch" schemes, which help teachers out of service to keep abreast of changes in schools; career break schemes, which guarantee a post when a teacher returns; refresher training courses,

[Mr. Baker]

for which a grant is available under the training grants scheme; part-time work and job sharing; and the provision of creche and nursery places. The solution lies in the hands of the local education authority and school employers, but much more can be done than at present, and I intend to do much to publicise the best practice so other authorities can follow it.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I know that many Members want to speak in what is a short debate.

Teaching is an attractive career for many mature entrants, both those looking for a career change and those seeking to re-enter the employment market. Four thousand five hundred mature entrants enter teaching each year for the first time. It is an important source of recruitment to the teaching profession. This is in addition to those who have re-entered teaching after a career break. With their experience and expertise, they have a great deal to offer schools and pupils.

I have offered assistance to this group. I have initiated the development of new courses in the shortage subjects: a shortened, two-year B Ed course and a part-time PGCE course. I have also funded a programme of 11 short taster courses. These give the mature entrants a feel for teaching and individual counselling and advice before they make the decision to become a teacher. I am also trying to encourage more mature people to enter teaching from the ethnic minorities. Across the country, 11 new initial courses aimed at the ethnic minorities have been set up with my support, providing some 200 training places. I am also supporting, at a cost of £30,000, a pilot project in Newham, which is helping men and women from these communities to enter teaching. Please wake up the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and tell him that.

I turn to licensed teachers, a policy also aimed at mature entrants. This scheme is designed to replace the range of existing routes by which teachers can be awarded qualified status without completing a standard course of initial training. It will be more rigorous than the existing system because it will ensure, as the existing system does not, that unqualified teachers receive the training they need and demonstrate their competence in the classroom before being granted qualified teacher status. It should also make it easier for mature people to enter teaching. I make no apology for that; I have already explained the importance of mature entrants.

But let me repeat: licensed teachers will be trained. They must be over 26. They must have had two years or more in higher education. That hardly adds up to a soft touch or a second-rate route into teaching.

The hon. Member for Blackburn asked me about the two years in higher education. In the consultation document that I shall be putting out and consulting widely on, we envisage two years to cover graduates and those with HNCs and HNDs. The hon. Gentleman asked me whether someone who had been sacked from two courses would be eligible. We do not intend to include such persons, but there might be cases in which someone has taken two years of a course—not necessarily a B Ed but perhaps a graduate course—and perhaps for family reasons has left and done something else and then wishes to enter teaching in their 30s. At the moment, they can do that and I would not want to exclude them, but the suggestion of two years is not a loophole to include anyone who has not been trained in higher education.

Mr. Straw: I am glad to have that assurance. I also asked the Secretary of State whether the qualification that those people attain will be a graduate qualification. Will it be a degree, and how will it be validated?

Mr. Baker: They will be given qualified teacher status. They will not be studying for a PGCE, so they will not achieve graduate status, but in virtually all cases they will be graduates in another subject. But I shall move on to that point in my proposal for articled teachers, which are quite separate from licensed teachers.

In all respects the new route is more rigorous than the present arrangements whereby an LEA can recommend anyone for qualified teacher status, without a minimum level of education being stipulated and without any further training being provided. The advantage is that someone who wishes to make a career change will not have to go back to college for a year—which can be very off-putting. They will be trained in post, but the training will be explicit and rigorous.

Licensed teachers will bring with them valuable experience from outside the profession. It is quite wrong to suggest that they will dilute the quality of the profession, as I hear was said at the teacher union conferences. That is an insult to people with important skills to offer whom we need to attract. It is also quite wrong to describe them as teachers on the cheap. In fact, licensed teachers will not come cheap, since to provide training in post while paying a salary and providing cover where needed will require a commitment of resources. We recognise that. The training of licensed teachers is already eligible for grant under the LEA training grants scheme, and I am considering what more is required.

We know that we need to increase the number of good teachers. We know that there are people out there who want to be teachers—good people with valuable experience. We also know that it is hard to insist that someone in mid-career should return to college for a year. The licensed teacher scheme squares that circle. It is one small but important measure towards ensuring that we obtain a sufficient number of high-quality, well trained and well qualified teachers, and I invite the Opposition to support it.

I now turn to the proposal for articled teachers, which has developed from a series of proposals that were put to me when I visited teacher training colleges, universities and polytechnics. I want to do more to attract into teaching graduates who want to train in schools but do not want to spend another year in college taking a PGCE. It is aimed at young graduates of 20, 21 or 22 who have studied three years of physics, French, history or English and do not wish to take a PGCE course in college, although that option will continue to be available.

We have been discussing with teacher trainers, chief education officers and heads a new experimental type of course for what my senior chief inspector has called "articled" teachers. Those students will do two years of school-based training. They will be doing actual teaching for much of the time. The money they get will reflect that. They will also enrol at a teacher training college which will

award them a PGCE when they complete their training. I shall be inviting bids from LEAs and teacher training colleges jointly for pilot schemes to start in September 1990.

The students will get a balance of practical experience and training in teaching methods. Most of their training will be done by teachers in the school. I shall be monitoring the scheme closely. LEAs and teacher trainers have welcomed the scheme. They agree with me that new forms of teacher training are needed and that we must be flexible in considering them.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I am sure that my right hon. Friend has read the quite outstanding report by HMI on St. Martin's teacher training college. That college always gets an outstanding report. If it were to apply for the scheme, I trust that it would stand a good chance of getting it.

Mr. Baker: I know where it is, and it is a very good teacher training college. We would envisage that the young graduates in other subjects would be taken on in schools and paid a salary. They would also enrol at a college so that they could do some of the theoretical and background work of a teacher training course. That would last for two years, and would attract many people into the profession.

I now turn to the question of the quality and rigour of initial teacher training. All courses of initial teacher training have to be approved by the holder of my office. Courses are approved against specified criteria. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education—CATE—advises me on whether courses satisfy the criteria.

I have reviewed the criteria and the machinery for applying them. I propose to reconstitute the council with effect from 1 January 1990 with a wider remit and new, tougher criteria. I shall ask it not only to scrutinise new courses but to monitor those it has already seen.

The new criteria will take account of recent developments, including in particular the national curriculum. For example, all new primary teachers will have to have studied English, maths, science and design and technology. The criteria will also, as far as possible, be expressed in terms of competencies. In approving a course, I want to be clear about what the student can do when he or she completes the course. For example, all new teachers will have to be able to teach and assess the subjects they have specialised in, to the level appropriate to the top of the age range for which they have trained.

I shall be issuing a consultation document tomorrow. It will set out my proposals in detail and contain the text of the new criteria. I am asking for comments by 30 June. Initial teacher training is now becoming more rigorous and practical. But we can and shall do more.

I have set out the action which the Government have taken. We accept that there is a serious problem that must be addressed.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: No, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

I have set out the actions we are taking to attract more people into the profession, our action on bursaries, licensed teachers and articled teachers, the criteria for teacher training courses and the increase in the number of teacher training courses in 1990. It is a positive programme for action to deal with the problem. We have been faced with a complete absence of ideas and total negation from the Opposition. The hon. Member for Blackburn has not produced any new ideas since he was appointed as my shadow. He is a perfect shadow; he is totally shadowy. We have heard no new ideas. The ideas that were supposed to be new were a recycling of my ideas. I understand that he is to make a great speech this week on something—on what, I do not know.

The Opposition should apply themselves more rigorously to deciding what should be done about teacher shortages instead of analysing the problem. They have been in opposition long enough to come up with some ideas. The fact that they have not produced any ideas means that they will be in opposition for even longer.

8.7 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Secretary of State has rehearsed the various measures that he has taken or proposes to take to help ease the shortage of teachers. But he has not attempted to tell the House his estimate of the net contribution that those measures will make to the overall shortage of teachers. He has not explained why, after his three years at the Department of Education and Science and after 10 years of the rule of his party, Britain is experiencing a far more serious problem of teacher supply in 1989 than existed in 1979.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) described the position as a crisis in teacher supply, the Secretary of State was playing with words when he said that he would not quite go along with that, but teacher shortages in certain areas and certain subjects are a matter of major concern. Let us settle for there being a crisis in the shortage of teachers in certain subjects and certain areas. That is different from what the Minister of State was reported to have said when she wanted to nail the myth of teacher shortage. I shall speak not just of a crisis in teacher supply. In my own area of London, and especially in the borough of Tower Hamlets, it is more a calamity and catastrophe.

In Tower Hamlets, the basic and most necessary of all the obligations on local education authorities—the obligation to supply schooling for children of school age—is not being met. It is a question not of children being sent home from school, but of children not being able to get into school. Throughout the past year, 400 to 500 children have been counted who were of school age, but were unable to find a place in school. Many were Bengali children and for them the deprivation of education was even more serious because of the linguistic and other cultural problems than it was for the ordinary residents of the area. After heroic efforts over the past six months, the number still stands at about 286. That is the number known. I fear, as do most people in the area, that there is a considerable additional number of uncounted children who have been unable to obtain a school place.

I am not describing a case in which the education authority—in this case, the Inner London education authority—has failed to provide schools. In the past 12 to 18 months, about five new schools have been built. The difficulty is that we have the schools, but not the teachers to man them. The last three schools completed in the borough have a capacity of more than 300 children, but have been able to accommodate only half that number as a result of the teacher shortage.

The problem is at its most vivid and most intolerable when one can cite children who cannot find places in

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school, who are out of school and should be in school. But that does not measure the dimensions of what is a major crisis in teacher supply in London and the south-east and what is a catastrophe in the case of inner London. I shall describe the vacancy position for full-time posts in the borough of Tower Hamlets. In nursery schools, 95 posts have been approved and there are 17 vacancies. In primary schools, there are 868 posts and 118 vacancies. In secondary schools, there are 742 posts and 122 vacancies. Those vacancies are met substantially, although not completely, by supply teachers. Without supply teachers, there would be a complete breakdown of education in the borough of Tower Hamlets.

In addition, the borough has a shocking turnover of permanent staff. In the last year for which there are figures, 1987-88, 33 per cent. of permanent staff in nursery and primary schools left. In secondary schools, the figure was 27 per cent. There is hardly a teacher to be found who has more than three years' experience in the borough.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the case that permanent vacancies are filled by supply teachers is worse than it seems in view of the fact that in one school in Tower Hamlets there were 10 different supply teachers in the first 15 weeks of the year? That is not teaching; it is just child-minding.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend is correct. I was going to say some additional words about the role of temporary teachers. Many temporary teachers are drawn from Australia and New Zealand. As the Secretary of State knows, they come over for a year or two. Schools are lucky if they stay for a full year, but at least they may stay for six months. I shall read the House a letter I received earlier this year from the education officer for division 5 of ILEA, which is Tower Hamlets. He said:

"the Division has only managed in the past 3/4 years to keep schools open by the use of casual cover teachers mainly from New Zealand and Australia. These teachers have for some time been experiencing considerable delays in getting their qualifications recognised by the D.E.S. This has meant that they have had to be employed, and paid initially at unqualified teacher rates, pending receipt of recognition. This often takes many months".

That has been a major problem, which I have pursued with the Secretary of State.

I cannot see any sign that matters will improve, even if all the schemes mentioned by the Secretary of State produce additional teachers. Unless different action is taken, I very much doubt that those teachers will find their way into the inner cities, where the teacher shortage is at its worst. I have two reasons for that belief. First, in division 5 we know from our own demographic records that we need 1,800 new places and the teachers required to look after those children by 1990. A further 1,000 places will be needed by 1992 and an estimated additional 500 by 1994.

The second reason for my pessimism is that it is at least possible at present, under ILEA, to target teachers and efforts to recruit them on the boroughs where there are the most grievous shortages. Tower Hamlets and Hackney, the adjacent borough, are receiving most of ILEA's attention. But by next April, there will be no ILEA and we shall all be fighting for teachers with our own resources. There will be appalling competition—an auction—for scarce teachers throughout London and the most deprived boroughs will come out worst.

ILEA is doing a great deal. The Secretary of State mentioned returning teachers, who are crucial. ILEA has been spending a considerable amount on a campaign to attract teachers back into the profession and it has also agreed to introduce an allowance for so-called non-qualified teachers—that is, qualified teachers from Australia and New Zealand whose qualifications are not recognised by the Department of Education and Science—to encourage them to stay in the authority. In addition, ILEA is trying to give increments for experience and is paying many to assist teachers with travel. But what ILEA has done is unlikely to solve the problem. The problem is too serious, especially in London where teachers have to face the appalling problems of finding accommodation.

When I considered the rather self-congratulatory speech of the Secretary of State, I could not help but think about some of the actions he has taken that have been anything but helpful. Why did he have to rate-cap ILEA when he knows that the payment of teachers and money for facilities could help to ease the teacher shortage? Why has he ignored all the evidence that teachers' pay is a major factor in creating a shortage of teachers? It is not only the Department of Education and Science which could help to ease those problems. The Home Office and the Department of Employment, when considering applications for work permits, do not recognise primary teachers as one of the priority categories. Teachers with primary teaching skills from Canada or elsewhere are not registered as a priority category and, therefore, are not given a permit to work in the United Kingdom.

It is a peculiarly bad situation. It is difficult to understand why, when the Select Committee on Home Affairs reported specifically on the borough of Tower Hamlets in its "Bangladeshis in Britain" report at the end of 1986 and pointed out that they were under-achieving educationally and not getting the quality, quantity or kind of education that they needed, the Minister has done nothing to help to alleviate what is basically a disgrace and a shame to the whole of our education system. That is extraordinary.

In conclusion, I remind the Secretary of State that he is a Minister in a Government whose Prime Minister started her third term with a pledge to take on, to help and to ameliorate the problems of the inner cities.

8.20 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I listened with interest to the elegant and eloquent speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I can understand even more than previously why he is held in such respect and affection in his constituency. He spoke with clear knowledge about London and I am sure that he will forgive me if I do not follow him down the road that he has signposted.

Like many of my hon. Friends, I welcome and enjoy Opposition Supply days. I am not certain who, on the Opposition side, is responsible for the selection of subjects, but whoever suggested this one on teacher shortages must be working for us. I am tempted to say that to initiate a debate on this subject is the equivalent, if not of shooting oneself in the foot, then of shooting up the blackboard. But then that is the increasing tendency of the hon.

Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). Witness his exhibition last week when he sought, on a completely bogus point of order, to attack my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the production of the consultation document on higher education.

However, even the hon. Gentleman is not all bad. I welcomed his comments in *The Sunday Times* about the suggestion for a "Queen's award for education for good schools". I welcome his conversion to that point because some years ago I suggested it to my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, now Lord Joseph, but he did not feel inclined to take it on board. I have also suggested it to my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State, except I ventured to suggest that it might be termed, "The Secretary of State's award for schools". I hope that now that there is some unity between the hon. Member for Blackburn and me on this, he might advance the case—

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What about "The Baker prize for excellence"?

Mr. Pawsey: Yes, as my hon. Friend has said, "The Baker prize for excellence," would be a good title for it.

Today's Opposition topic is teacher shortages and, like so many others, it is wide of the mark. The facts are that last year 1·5 per cent. of all primary and 1 per cent. of all secondary posts were unfilled—that is actually fewer than in 1987. The shortages, not surprisingly, were most felt in the south-east—Particularly London which was the point made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. But it is fair to say that there is no overall significant shortage of teachers. Indeed, I was pleased to read that the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers, reporting on the first destination survey of students completing university courses of initial training for the teaching profession in 1988, said:

"It is pleasing to note that in 1988, after a slight dip in 1987, the figure for qualified students known to have obtained a teaching post in the UK returned to its normal level (75·1 per cent.); this was despite the increase in output."

That last phrase should surely be the key to teacher shortages. There is an increase in the number of people joining the profession. That suggests that this debate, like so many others initiated by the Opposition, is out of date. That is par for the Opposition course and once more they have chosen to debate a subject that is showing signs of improving. It seems that Opposition Members are deliberately deciding to select subjects that show Government policies in an improving light.

Despite what the Opposition say, young people are increasingly seeing teaching as an attractive and worthwhile profession. There is little truth, if any, in the allegation that teaching is an underrated profession with morale at rock bottom. Indeed, the evidence suggests the opposite.

Like my hon. Friends, I am certainly not complacent and, although there may be sufficient teachers overall, there are shortages in certain subjects and recruitment difficulties in some regions. These points have been recognised by the Government for some years, and clearly the Government's action is now bearing fruit.

I welcome the more flexible use of starting salaries and incentive allowances. I welcome the more active local recruitment of teachers. I welcome more part-time working and, above all, I welcome the active encouragement to former teachers to return to the profession. That point was hammered home by my right hon. Friend.

In fact, 1988 was an excellent recruitment year for teachers, but, that having been said, the training for teachers must be right. Social theory is OK but it may be thought to be a poor substitute for actual classroom practice. Education best takes place in a disciplined environment and in some cases, and in some schools, that necessary discipline is lacking. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies, she will give some thought to how the subject of teaching is taught in our colleges. I hope that she might persuade those who produce the syllabus in those colleges to build in more classroom practice.

I am absolutely convinced that the overwhelming majority of teachers are committed to their work and to the young people in their charge, and I should like to see their remuneration reflect both the importance of their work and the commitment which the majority of them bring to it.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman has never said that before to his right hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey: With respect, that is what I am saying to my right hon. Friend who is listening to this debate in the same intent way as Opposition Members.

I should like to see good teachers getting more money and greater differentials in the profession, with those who are the best getting the best pay.

My right hon. Friend has already sought to persuade the Treasury to make available additional funds for teachers. I wish him well when the new round starts and hope that he is successful in obtaining better funding. I found it significant that the Chancellor is a signatory to the Government's amendment to the motion and I am certain that, when my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury read the report of the debate, they will study with care the references to increased pay for teachers. I hope that when they do so they will recognise the importance of having a reasonably remunerated profession and that they will ensure that the necessary funds are made available.

Earlier I referred to the fact that in some areas and in some subjects there are difficulties and I very much hope that my right hon. Friend will not let a vocal, if shortsighted, opposition to licensed teachers prevent him from going forward with this idea. Good teachers are those who have the knowledge and qualifications, and the ability and willingness to communicate that knowledge to children and young people in the classroom.

I support the concept of licensed teachers and look forward to reading, in due course, the detailed proposals, but I believe that the trailed plans might be inadequate in one respect. It seems that present ideas make provision for local education authorities to supervise schemes for licensed teachers. I believe that that may not work as well as it should, because some local education authorities remain heavily union oriented and we are all well aware of the views of certain unions regarding the concept of licensed teachers. It would, therefore, seem to me preferable if responsibility for supervision of licensed teachers were to lie with the individual school. Let it be their decision. Schools and heads will enjoy a greater discretion under the Education Reform Act 1988 and that discretion should operate in this area as well as others.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend say that licensed teachers should be supervised by experienced teachers for a period of, say, two years.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Having had a lot of experience in schools for many years, I should like the hon. Member to tell the House how schools that are understaffed will find the manpower to supervise and train the licensed teacher.

Mr. Pawsey: I have already said that it will be on-the-job training. I believe that experienced teachers have a great deal of knowledge to impart to those who are eager to learn, and those who are coming forward to take advantage of the licensed teacher scheme will be anxious to learn and, in turn, to impart their knowledge to the young people in their charge.

Mr. Flannery: Answer the question.

Mr. Pawsey: I have answered the question and if the hon. Gentleman was not listening, as usual, that is his hard luck.

I believe that at the end of two years and only after the satisfactory completion of that period the licensed teacher would be fully qualified. If that idea is regarded, as it clearly is by certain Opposition Members, as being revolutionary, let me say that the right already exists in grant-maintained schools and, if we trust those schools to supervise licensed teachers, why should not other schools have a similar right?

Licensed teachers would enable genuinely committed men and women to enter the profession, would constitute an additional source of experience and expertise and should be welcomed by all who are genuinely concerned about teacher numbers. Licensed teachers would not dilute the quality of the profession. That point has been well hammered home by my right hon. Friend. The word he used in this context was "rigorous", and he was right. Clearly, this route to the profession will be a difficult one, but I am certain that many will wish to take advantage of it. It is unfair and unjust to suggest that licensed teachers will dilute the profession. Licensed teachers, in my view, will help to ensure an adequate supply of intelligent and gifted people who want to teach and to work with the country's youngsters. They should be encouraged to come forward, for they will do much to improve the quality and standard of state education.

8.32 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The honest seeker after truth might have been slightly surprised by the different interpretations put upon the same facts in this debate. The debate opened with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) arguing factually matters that were not contradicted by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State was then asked implicitly to accept or deny the comment made by his colleague the Minister of State that the teacher shortage was a myth. There was no denial of that, yet the Secretary of State admitted that there clearly was a problem. He announced that the Government had taken measures, were taking measures and would take measures—all of which is welcome—but did not suggest —and he was specifically asked that question from these Benches—that even all those measures together would ensure that we had the number of teachers we needed.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) then confirmed the facts and showed that in inner London particularly—it is worse here than elsewhere —there is not just a problem but a fundamental, deep-rooted and long-lasting crisis. He used stronger words than those, "catastrophe" and others. I have a constituency which, except for the river in between, is next door to his, and we in Southwark share many of the same desperate week-by-week problems and concerns about shortage of teachers that he has argued apply to Tower Hamlets. Southwark, Tower Hamlets and other inner London boroughs have all had terrible recruitment problems over many years.

Then we had the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) saying that some of the proposals are good but, reading between his lines, arguing, and possibly for the first time, that nothing will solve the fundamental problem unless there is more money for teachers and more fundamental ways of improving their morale.

The reality is confirmed in the recently published annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools, entitled "Standards in Education", which makes the case extremely clearly. At the end of that report, from paragraph 67 onwards, the senior inspector points the way forward in the light of the Education Reform Act 1988 and says:

"In addition there are a number of sphinxes along the route whose riddles will need to be solved if the education service is to respond effectively to the many changes it is called upon to make.

The first of those centres on that most important component of an effective education service namely, ensuring a sufficient supply of suitably qualified and competent teachers trained and willing to set about doing all that needs to be done."

He concludes that section with these words:

"Standards of learning are never improved by poor teachers and there are no cheap, high quality routes into teaching."

He then goes on to make it clear that the need for teachers will grow because of the demands that the new educational format places on the education system The national curriculum, the new responsibilities for schools that follow from the GCSE and, as increasing numbers of hon. Members know, the practical implications for teachers' time of more and more assessment and more and more non-contact work, mean that we shall need more and more teachers. Nothing that the Secretary of State has said today suggests that we will catch up and supply our education service with those numbers of teachers as a result of the sorts of small, limited-effect remedies that he has proposed.

Lastly, the senior chief inspector makes the point that, in addition to the general problem and the growing problem because of new demands, there are, of course, the specific problems which we all know have now been identified in specific subjects to complement the specific geographical areas of difficulty. Then we have his recommendation:

"In seeking to ensure that is what happens"—

that is, that we manage to meet the demands of the educational future—

"teachers' pay, conditions of service and the nature of the changes intended will all have a part to play. But of great importance to most teachers is that the work they do is seen to be valued and rated highly by society; that its difficulties are understood and that teachers and education are not used as convenient scapegoats for all society's problems. Currently"—

and this is his finding; not a party political finding—

"too many teachers feel that their profession and its work are misjudged and seriously undervalued."

That is this year's report on the teaching profession and that is why, when it comes to voting on the motion at the

end of the debate, it would be wrong to vote for the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, the Chancellor and others, which

"welcomes the clear indication of the success"

of the measures so far taken. Although of course there have been some successes, after 10 years in office the Government are complacent if they say that what they have done has been successful. What they have done so far has not succeeded. We do not have the teachers in place. We do not have teachers with morale in place. We do not have teachers as a profession paid adequately to ensure adequate supply in the weeks, months and years to come.

In inner London one feels that as strongly as anywhere. We are short of over 650 teachers in London alone. It is two and a half times worse in the capital city than the average across the country.

It makes me reflect that, perhaps, there is above all one simple question that the Secretary of State and his colleagues must answer: what is a teacher worth? If we imagine that teachers are in a free market, good performance and high productivity would lead to improving salaries. As the Secretary of State has acknowledged that teachers during the past year have put on a good performance and increased their productivity —given all the other demands on them—surely market forces should prevail, at least to some extent, and teachers should be awarded a substantial pay increase. However, they have received an increase of 6 per cent., which is below the current inflation rate. That is derisory. It does not recognise the teachers' hard work during the past year, let alone the other demands we make of them. It is about time—and the Secretary of State ducked this issue from the beginning to the end of his speech—that teachers were offered salaries comparable with those that could be earned by graduates in careers such as accountancy, management or industry. One will not get people to stay in teaching if they are not paid the same as they would receive if they sold their skills elsewhere.

I find it ridiculous that one police force in England and Wales—the Metropolitan police—spends more on recruitment in a year than the Department of Education and Science does on recruiting teachers as a career. Last year, the Metropolitan police spent £1.1 million. The Department of Education and Science's teaching as a career unit spent £0·9 million. We should learn from the Metropolitan police. Perhaps we should have a "wanted" notice, such as the police have, to make people aware of the drama and the danger of the present position in words such as

"Missing teachers. Do you know one? Have you seen one? Can you help?"

It is about time that the Department of Education and Science made people aware of the nature, the urgency and depth of the problem which it is not investing sufficient money to redress, even from its departmental budget.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman muddles up like with unlike. If he wants to compare the recruitment of the police and the recruitment of teachers, the comparison should be between what the Home Office spends on recruiting police and issuing general advertisements and what the Department of Education and Science spends. The Metropolitan police, as a direct employer, is like a local education authority. The hon. Gentleman should look at the local education authorities' budgets for recruitment. That is the analogy.

Mr. Hughes: I shall deal exactly with that point. When there have been shortages in recruits to the police or armed forces in the decade that the Government have been in office, the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Secretary of State for Defence have said that we must pay more because we need people to work in the front line. We have heard no such response from the Treasury to help the Department of Education and Science to a similar job. Of course, the front-line responsibility for recruiting comes from the education authorities, which are the direct employers. However, we all know from where they get their money. They obtain their money from the Department of Education and Science; most of their money comes from grant. The Government need to give a lead, which in 10 years we have not seen.

It is a disgrace that we are asking people who go into teaching to stay at a regularly lower level of income and with lower levels of career prospects than they would elsewhere in the professional world. I intervened to ask the Secretary of State about the bursary schemes. There have been some improvements in the sense that bursaries may have reversed the decline of those going into shortage subjects. However, many of the targets have not been achieved. The Secretary of State has admitted that in the House.

The licensed teacher scheme still has the sort of problems mentioned in the intervention by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) during the speech of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). In order for licensed teachers to be trained by full-time, long-term teachers, the teachers already in post need the time to do the training, in addition to their other responsibilities. That means there would need to be more teachers to cover the same amount of teaching time. That means more money will be needed, because one must supply the resources. Of course, it is a good idea for those already in the profession to train others in the classroom, but they cannot do that without more money being given to those education authorities, because training is an additional function and teachers are already hard pressed and overworked.

What about the pool of inactive teachers? We need to look more closely at recruiting from that supply. There are more than 400,000 people currently in that pool. I am sure that many of them would come back if they thought that their careers would be well rewarded and worth returning to.

It is, of course, welcome to have new ideas put forward. We heard, but only in shadowy terms, the idea of articled teachers, although it appears to have a potential. I shall not reject it as a possible idea, but other approaches are needed too. Many ideas currently being put to the Select Committee by the employers, the Association of County Councils, are practical ways of recruiting people, of holding people and of assisting those who have family commitments and otherwise might not be able to return to teaching.

The regional difficulties will not be solved by differential pay, which appears to be rejected by all the best evidence. If we are to tackle teacher shortage, the Government's housing policy needs to change to ensure that teachers in areas of high housing cost can find somewhere to live, that they have the ability to travel to work and that they can move to where the jobs are.

One of the difficulties is that the consequence of shortages is that not only does morale go down and

[Mr. Hughes]

reliance on supply teachers go up, but we ask teachers regularly to cover for colleagues as well. That means that more and more teachers are teaching subjects with which they are not familiar. The difficulties not only concern recruiting teachers from Australia and New Zealand, but regularly there has been pressure for Irish teachers, for example, to be accepted as qualified and allowed to teach here. It has taken a long time to persuade the Department of Education and Science to allow many of them to come to help.

In the months to come, with the national curriculum, teachers will have substantial new pressures on them. I say to the Secretary of State and his Ministers that we need to restore free bargaining between employer and employee, with the almost certain result that teachers will be paid more. More money must not just go to the teachers who go to the Government's favoured institutions such as the CTCs. Why should people be paid more to teach in a CTC than in any other school in a hard-pressed city front-line environment? The reality is that they are being paid more because it is one of the only ways in which the Secretary of State can be sure that he will get teachers into those colleges. That is another form of distortion in favour of his latest scheme.

We need to improve the range of senior grades. An enormous number of teachers are held at a top grade without any prospect of improving their lot thereafter. We need to develop secondment schemes and increasingly to put more money into in-service training. We need to widen the bonus schemes too.

I have put five specific ideas to the Secretary of State, but I end with this. Unless we increase substantially the funding for schools and for teachers from the Department of Education and Science budget, we shall not deal with the continuing problem of teacher shortages. The latest public expenditure figures show that the increase in the schools budget will be less than 4 per cent. between this financial year and the next. Unless the Secretary of State or his Minister of State give an assurance tonight that planned spending on teachers will at least keep pace with inflation, we shall end the next decade with the same problems as we have ended this. Now is the time for investment for the future. The Government have the ability to spend money. They must now do so.

8.48 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) predictably accused my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of complacency. That appears to be a rather surprising suggestion, because, if my right hon. Friend had been complacent about teachers, they would have had a much easier time than they have had in the past few years.

I believe that my right hon. Friend knows well that we face a potentially serious problem. What he has not been able to underline—I imagine for reasons of state—is that it is a problem not only of quantity but of quality. My right hon. Friend will face a very serious problem as we get up to the demographic dip in 1995. On the one hand, he will be competing more and more intensively with other employers outside who will be in a position—because they will be private enterprise firms—to improve the package of attractions that they offer to young graduates and, on the other, he will need to do two things at once in his general strategy on education.

My right hon. Friend is trying to raise the standards in schools at the same time as he is trying to expand the number of people in higher education—incidentally, I congratulate him on his consultation paper on that subject. If my right hon. Friend does not succeed in recruiting not only the right number but the right quality of teachers, we shall see an expansion in higher education, but also a dilution of higher education. That would be a catastrophe. There are some universities where quality is not all that it should be now. Because of the failure to recruit sufficient teachers of sufficient quality, there is the stark possibility of a failure to deliver the national curriculum in schools and a simultaneous watering down of British higher education. That is a fearful prospect.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend announced tonight —I shall look at the details tomorrow—that he will tighten up the conditions and criteria in teacher-training colleges, because, as I have already said, my right hon. Friend has two problems: he must get more teachers and better ones. I hope that he will do whatever he can to demystify some of the pseudo-professionalism that arises in those institutions. I hope that he will continue to support and encourage best practice because he will do a great service to the profession as well as to parents.

Recently I read a study by an academic—my right hon. Friend probably paid for it—which came, as such educational studies often do, to conclusions of a stunning banality. The problem posed was why it was difficult to recruit teachers and there were three parts to the answer: first pay, secondly status, and thirdly the children—that is especially important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is wrong to say that teachers must be reasonably paid. Given our current situation, teachers should be well paid, provided that the pressures on them to improve the quality of their profession in the ways hinted at by my right hon. Friend are maintained and provided that the profession accepts the desirability and inevitability of differential pay according to merit as far as possible.

My right hon. Friend must make it clear to the Chancellor of the Exchequer—I am sure that he will—that we must not think in terms of paying teachers what we can get away with, but paying them well, because a potential crisis is looming in the mid-1990s. If he is short of arguments for convincing the Chancellor, he could point out that if the Chancellor cannot afford to pay for education, he cannot afford an economy. It is education that will produce the highly trained technicians that will be needed and they will decide whether his economy sinks or swims. If we cannot afford to pay for education, we cannot afford a civilised country. I do not need to give any illustrations to the House of the yobbishness and the loutishness with which our society is infested and which has a lot to do with basic problems of education. I hope that my right hon. Friend will succeed in not only getting whatever crumbs he can from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but in making clear to him that we need a forward-looking strategy that will deal with the growing crisis rather than waiting until it is upon us.

The second problem regarding the recruitment of teachers, as suggested by our expensive academic study, was that of teacher status. When the average person is

watching the television and wondering what to do with his life and he happens to see NUT representatives' behaviour at their conference, he may not be automatically attracted into the profession by that rather dissolute image. Teachers could do a lot to help themselves regarding status. Teachers must also look at their own teaching methods. I do not believe that parents or children will respect teachers if

"the schoolmaster timidly flatters his pupils and the pupils make light of their masters as well as their attendants. Generally speaking the young copy their elders, argue with them and will not do as they are told; while the old, anxious not to be thought disagreeable tyrants, imitate the young and condescend to enter into their jokes and amusements."

That is not the view of some reactionary frump—it is not even my view; it comes from Plato. The problem has been with us for some time, but the image that teachers project to parents and to children will not improve the status of the profession if it is still based on the old-fashioned ideas of the 1960s. However, as I have just illustrated, the problem has been with us for many years.

The third part of the answer given in the academic study related to children. We must be imaginative when considering this aspect of the problem. We are living in a country with the highest divorce rate in Europe. I listened with interest and with respect to the points made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I do not represent a constituency with social and economic problems that are remotely like those faced by the right hon. Gentleman's constituency, but problems exist.

When I visit schools in my area I ask how the reading is coming along. That is a pointed question because in some of my schools there is a tendency to talk about damp patches on the wall. I am more interested in the quality of education. When I ask that question, some teachers say to me with a laugh, "Reading, Mr. Walden? Some of our children cannot even talk properly." They tell me that their first problem as teachers is not what to teach that day, but whether to comfort the mother who is crying around the corner because the marriage has just broken up or the partner has gone away for the nth time, or the child who has come into the classroom crying because his father or mother has disappeared for the nth time.

The social problems faced in this country that occur to a greater degree here than elsewhere in Europe—remember our divorce rate—are immediately impacting on the teacher and making teaching a less attractive profession. I am not known for being particularly soft-hearted to teachers, but when such problems arise in my socially privileged constituency, it does not take much imagination to consider what is happening in others, mainly Labour-held, although I accept that a few of my hon. Friends also face similar problems.

My final point—I raise it with perhaps tedious predictability from the point of view of my right hon. Friend—is that teachers also face children who come to school in the morning, often, although not exclusively, from broken homes having stayed up late at night. They have spent the night not doing directly educational things, but a thing that tends to de-educate and cretinise children—watching four or five hours of television. What are the Government going to do about that? They have a curious strategy. On the one hand, my right hon. Friend is trying to fill the heads of children with something worthwhile, but on the other my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary seems to want to fill them with cretinising rubbish from Mr. Murdoch. One could present this as a rational division of labour—a sort of Champs de Mars by which one digs a hole and another fills it up. But it seems not a particularly intelligent approach to what is a fundamental problem.

I was struck the other day to note that the Secretary of State, with impressive educational idealism, was teaching "A Tale of Two Cities." I do not think I am being too hard on the children of today when I suggest that few children in this country have read or will ever read "A Tale of Two Cities" because it is full of long words and they are not taught to read difficult books. So if what the Home Secretary plans in his broadcasting White Paper goes ahead, not only will children not read Dickens; they will be lucky if they can get their minds round Adrian Mole.

All of this has a direct impact on the problem that we are discussing because, with about a third of British marriages breaking up, teachers face all the problems that arise from such a large incidence of broken families. They also face the dismal prospect of being confronted by the telly-tired child in the morning. If the Home Secretary has his way, that child will be cretinised even more.

These are serious matters. They may sound tangential, but they are central to the whole problem of boosting the profession, qualitatively and quantitatively, because we do not want to get into the situation in which we found ourselves in the 1960s—which everyone, including Opposition Members, must recall—when we had to take whoever we could get to teach. Many people would not touch the profession with a barge pole today.

The Secretary of State knows my views on pay; we must pay as much as possible to good teachers simply to obtain them. I earnestly appeal to him to take an even closer hand than I am sure he has been taking already in the question of the broadcasting White Paper. I repeat that British children spend as much time watching TV as they spend in the classroom.

To solve the problem of teacher shortage, two things are necessary. One is the need for imagination, and my right hon. Friend has a lot of that. The other is cash. I hope the Chancellor of the Exchequer will see the force in the arguments that are being adduced, not only by me—mine may sound rather predictable—but by my hon. Friends and by some Opposition Members. Their remarks cannot all be dismissed as party political boosterism. Consider, for example, the speech, to which I referred, of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney.

9.2 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) made a thoughtful contribution, and my hon. Friends and I could agree with a good deal of it. He quoted Plato. I remind him that Plato never had to contend with the present Prime Minister and her Secretary of State for Education and Science. The hon. Gentleman will accept that Plato lived in a vastly different world. However, the hon. Gentleman came to the fundamental point in the end, which is that we are discussing teacher shortages and not, for example, what is happening in broadcasting. We live in a get-rich-quick society in which children are taught things that we thought they should never learn.

It must be remembered that this debate was initiated by the Opposition. Had that not been the case, the debate would not be taking place. A characteristic of the speeches of Conservative Members has been their attempt to

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defend, as though it had never occurred, a crime over which they have presided. The nation's education system has been forced to the point where the Government are having to take steps which we thought, indeed hoped, would never be needed again. I refer to the problem which faced Britain after the second world war.

At that time we had to consider allowing people who had never taught to stand before our children and teach them. We refused to allow that to happen. Instead, we created an emergency scheme by which we put people through college and taught them how to teach.

Although the hon. Member for Buckingham was reasonable in the statements that he made, he knows only too well that it is unfair to attack the teachers when the real problem is the shortage of teachers. That shortage has been brought about by the actions of the Government. Conservative Members cannot escape the responsibility they share in those actions.

I will not go into the question of licensed teachers. The vast majority of the teaching profession is totally against that concept. We got rid of licensed teachers years ago. The idea of licensed teachers is not a revolutionary one. Indeed, it is counter-revolutionary. We never want them again, and the fact that the Government will foist them on us shows how desperate they are to push people in front of our children—not their children—when such people have never taught before. That will not be tolerated, especially when there are available people who are properly qualified to teach.

Teacher training colleges have been closed all over the country. The Government know that they have created the problem that we face, and they are not prepared to admit it or even talk about it. In 1979, the discussion was about how to educate our children. There was no crisis over a shortage of teachers. As I say, not since the end of the war has such a crisis existed.

Conservative Members refuse to admit what has been done in their name. They have no humility about it. Indeed, they adopt an appalling arrogance, talking and laughing about a problem that is causing great difficulty. Some Conservative Back Benchers are happy to talk and giggle. Indeed, one of them, the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), accused me earlier of not listening, yet he is not even in his place to listen to my remarks.

To my knowledge, when the hon. Gentleman has been in the Chamber he has never said a naughty word against the leadership of his party, even though he knows how wrong they have been on this issue. After all, was he not a teacher? He is in line to be chief groveller to the Prime Minister and to the Secretary of State, who is running the state system of education. The right hon. Gentleman also sits there smiling in his usual way, despite all that he has done.

The members of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts became profoundly conscious of the fact that we were facing a crisis in education and particularly in the shortage of teachers. As I look at the Conservative Benches, I wonder whether any of the Members sitting there have been, please put up their hands? It is clear that they are not here, but I am here to explain why we on the the Select Committee are studying this issue.

We are well aware of the crisis in education, and I must report that only one person who appeared before the Select Committee—I refer not to the Secretary of State but to his chief functionary in the Department, Mr. Clive Savine—asked us what crisis we were talking about. He had not noticed any crisis, he told us. Nor had he noticed that morale in the teaching profession was low.

The Minister of State has claimed that there is no crisis and that it is all a myth. Even the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth—with a great private school such as Rugby in his constituency—has not noticed that a crisis exists. Indeed, if an elephant walked through the Chamber and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State told him not to see it, he would say there was no elephant. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members grin like Cheshire cats, despite the crimes that they have committed against our children.

I have with me the embarrassing last report of the HMI—embarrassing for the Government—which spoke of

"that most important component of an effective education service, namely ensuring a sufficient supply of suitably qualified teachers . . . Without that, the rest falls."

If the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, who accused me of not listening, will listen to me, I advise him to read that paragraph. Nearly all the teachers say that there is a crisis in education.

The general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, usually a great friend of the Government, used the word "catastrophe", as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) did in his great speech. He was attacked for using an emotive word. We have made it plain that there is an approaching catastrophe. At the same time the Government say that it does not exist. Teacher training establishments, both colleges and universities, say that there is a problem. They also say that morale in the staff room is putting young people off teaching. The Secretary of State should not boast about how many say that they are going into teaching. A massive number of young people who have said that do not take it up. The right hon. Gentleman has said that they all come back, but that is not true. The Government are underplaying a serious problem.

Why is there a shortage and a developing crisis? It is because of the failure of the Government to realise the extent of the problem. I sat through the three months of the Committee stage of the Education Reform Act 1988. Ministers never agreed that there was a teacher shortage, created by the Government. They attack teachers and talk about the lowering of teacher morale. Anyone who is honourable in the Chamber knows that, previously, if any hon. Member mentioned teachers or the teachers' unions, there was a howl of abuse from the Conservative Benches, led by the Secretary of State, his predecessor and the Prime Minister. Now there is a slight change. The Secretary of State began his speech by praising teachers; that is new. Some Tory Members asked for more cash for teachers; that is new. The hon. Member for Buckingham asked for a wage that was not just satisfactory but much bigger; he has not said that before.

Even the mention of teachers used to cause trouble, but now hon. Members on the Government Benches are beginning to praise teachers. Let us have the praise translated into cash to encourage people into the profession which the Government have belittled for so

long. They know that they must be realistic about the profession now if they are to get more teachers in. We want teachers who are trained, not licensed teachers.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: Time is getting on, but the hon. Gentleman sat with me on the Select Committee. I agreed with him at least twice, so I shall give way.

Mr. Bowis: Perhaps we can make it a third time. As the son and nephew of a teacher, may I invite the hon. Gentleman to question in his mind whether teachers had their morale raised all that much by the Labour Government who cut their pay in real terms by 12 per cent.?

Mr. Flannery: At that time I was one of the hon. Members who, from those Benches, attacked my Government in a way that none of the Conservative Back Benchers will ever attack this Government. I was struggling for education. No Labour Government ever did to education what this Government are doing to it. Because of their arrogance, they do not even admit it.

I should like to say much more but time is getting on. If the Government want to recruit teachers, they cannot do so without putting a large amount of money into teachers' pockets. They must also give them back their negotiating rights. The Government were condemned by the International Labour Organisation, part of the United Nations, for taking away the negotiating power of teachers. Time will show what will happen if it is all blah that we are told about the recruitment of teachers. I am worried that chaos will result from the Education Reform Act, so-called.

9.14 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Listening to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) reminded me of a recent speech by the president of the National Union of Teachers, Mrs. June Fisher. I thought that with suitable amendments to her speech one could adapt it to the Opposition. She said:

"Teachers should stop moaning and take pride in making a success of the Government's education reforms."

We should ask the Opposition to stop moaning and take a pride in the success of the Government's education reforms, and to brush up their professional image or risk losing the support of parents. The president of the NUT said:

"The whingeing teachers are not in the business of caring for children."

I do not think that the Opposition are either, because they constantly live in a world of trying to make a crisis of every situation in education.

I have heard the hon. Member for Hillsborough make exactly the same speech on education every year for the six years that I have been in the House. Every time he makes the same speech about the Government denigrating teachers. If the hon. Gentleman can find for me any quotes where the Secretary of State for Education has denigrated teachers I will give £10 to a charity of his choice for each one. I say that in the knowledge that I will not be a penny worse off because I do not believe that he will find any such quotations. It suits him to maintain that myth.

The only people who can send the teaching profession into a deeper depression are teachers themselves, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said. As Mrs. Fisher commented:

"If somebody goes on long enough about everything being doom and gloom, then that becomes the reality. Teachers have to project a much more positive image."

I entirely agree.

It will do all of us well to get the debate into perspective. Yes, there are difficulties with teacher recruitment—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) wishes to intervene, I shall gladly give way, rather than have subliminal chatter. There are difficulties but we have to get them into perspective.

The other day *The Oxford Times* had a headline:

"Cash plea as education crisis looms".

I had a meeting of all the secondary teachers in my patch; I asked what teacher shortages there were. They told me that they were short of one half of a physics teacher and one half of a physical education teacher. Because it has become an accepted norm that there is a crisis in teacher recruitment, that is projected by all the newspapers and the media, but it is not real. When there are real difficulties, because the Treasury and everyone else has heard people crying "wolf" for so long, it is an accepted part of the political scene and no one responds in the proper way.

In 1988, 1·5 per cent. of all primary posts and 1 per cent. of all secondary posts were unfilled. That is a problem but it is not the sort of problem that the Opposition have sought to make it out to be. Indeed, the Government have reversed the declining trend in applications to initial teacher training. Between 1987 and 1988 vacant posts in shortage subjects in secondary schools fell significantly; they fell by 33 per cent. in mathematics, by 39 per cent. in craft design and technology and by 48 per cent. in physics. There are regional variations. Obviously it will be more difficult to recruit teachers in inner city areas and in some of the prosperous home counties. That is the same for any occupation or profession. The greatest concern of employers in my constituency is skill shortages and recruitment. It is the same across the board, whether in teaching or in other spheres. That is not unique to teaching.

As opportunities for graduates substantially increase, so too will competition for graduates. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham that we must look at the situation that will confront Britain. With the changing demography, school-leavers and those going to university will become fewer and recruiting sufficient numbers into the teaching profession will obviously become more difficult. Not only must we ensure that good teachers are well paid but we must start to consider the possibility of regional pay differentials for teachers so that those areas that need to recruit teachers more can pay premium rates to do so.

We must also recognise that some 400,000 qualified teachers are not teaching at present. My young son goes to a state school not two miles away from the House. A short while ago a teacher vacancy arose at that school. I happened to be talking to other parents in the school playground and I was staggered by the number of parents with teaching qualifications who would like the opportunity to return to the profession.

It is also a myth to maintain that all inner London schools have difficulty recruiting teachers. When my son's school advertised for a deputy head teacher it had five

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good applicants. There are large numbers of qualified teachers who should be able, and should be encouraged, to return to the profession.

That is a matter for local education authorities. It is not good enough for the Opposition to come to debates such as this every time with the two words "more money". If that is all they intend to say we could have a much shorter debate. Local education authorities must use some imagination in exploring the possibilities of job sharing, more part-time work for teachers and maintaining more contact with former teachers.

Teachers often complain that they are worried about returning to the profession because they may be rusty and need to brush up their professional skills. Local education authorities may find it worthwhile to pay teachers an honorarium each year on condition that they attend a one or two-week refresher course each year while they are out of the profession, having children or whatever, so that when they return to teaching they do not feel that they have lost touch with it.

Local authorities could also do more by way of flexible starting salaries and incentive allowances to encourage teachers to take difficult posts. Thanks to the various pay awards made over the past two or three years, an increasing number of incentive allowances are available to local education authorities to reward teachers. There are a host of initiatives for local education authorities to take. I suspect that some boroughs and local education authorities are having difficulty in recruiting teachers because of the image that they have projected for far too long.

The truth is that many inner-city schools in Britain are as good as those elsewhere. For example, many of those in the borough of Lambeth are as good as many of those in Oxfordshire. Many children have reached the same standard. But the image that is constantly projected by boroughs such as Lambeth is not conducive to persuading teachers to go there to teach. If local education authorities had a more positive image of themselves and what can be achieved in their schools, they would probably find people more forthcoming.

It is wrong to pretend that the Government are not responding to the real difficulties that exist. Teachers in surplus subjects are being retrained in shortage subjects. The teaching as a career unit has made enormous strides in attracting individuals to return to the profession. That unit has contacted thousands of people. There is the bursary scheme and the new courses for initial teacher training on shortage subjects. All those are worthwhile initiatives. The Government have come forward with a host of initiatives to tackle the problem.

The Opposition have not made one positive suggestion this evening. As Opposition Front Bench spokesmen go, they are fairly talented, but it is disappointing that they should spend half of a precious Opposition Supply day simply saying that there is a problem. The Government are addressing that problem and it is depressing that the Opposition do not acknowledge that. They do not recognise that, nor join with us in positively promoting teaching and winning people into the profession. Instead, there is constant unnecessary doom and gloom simply to score a few brownie points in the local government elections. Always seeking to make out that the situation in our schools is worse than it is is unlikely to encourage people into teaching and to give parents confidence in what is happening in our state schools. All that does British education a grave disservice.

The Opposition and some of the teachers' unions are foolish to reject out of hand the concept of licensed teachers. I hope that they noted that when the London borough of Croydon recently had a shortage of science teachers it advertised for untrained science graduates, attracting more than 200 replies, from which it recruited 12 good honours graduates who are now making a considerable contribution to that borough.

The truth of the matter is that on the issue of ensuring that we have sufficient well-paid, well-motivated, good teachers in our schools, as in every other education initiative in Britain, it is the Conservative party, the Government and Conservative Members who are coming forward with the ideas and initiatives and demonstrating a commitment to Britain's state schools. All the Opposition can do is to shout for more money and simply seek to make out that everything is always far worse than it is. It is only by creating such a manic depressive state that they believe they can win any votes in education.

9.26 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) pointed out that during his speech no Conservative member of the Select Committee which investigated the shortage of teachers was present. Not only were they not present while he was speaking, but not one has been present throughout the debate. Given the expertise that they gathered during the Committee's many sessions, they may have been commanded to stay away in case the facts got in the way of the propaganda that we have been fed this evening. Despite the Government's initiatives, the problem of teacher shortages will be with us for as long as we can see, because those initiatives do not deal with the problem in any significant way.

The background to this debate must be the high quality of the teaching profession. Let me quote from one paragraph of the second report of the interim advisory committee:

> "As last year the Committee has been impressed by the commitment and dedication of teachers in all types of schools visited. Despite some of the public criticism aimed at teachers over recent years—which, happily, Government spokesmen are now going some way"—

not all the way—

> "to redress—we found a high degree of professionalism in support of the education of the nation's young people."

Paragraphs 3.39 and 3.19 give more detail on the quality that our teachers provide, despite the difficulties that they face.

In his opening speech, the Secretary of State pointed to a number of his initiatives. We should look at one or two of them at least. He said that this year there would be 2,000 extra places in initial teacher training. Will all those places be filled? Will the majority of them be filled by graduates in those subjects with the greatest shortages? Even with those 2,000 extra places, and even if they were restricted to the subjects with teacher shortages, there would still be insufficient teachers to meet the shortages that will occur in the years ahead.

Only today, members of the Select Committee were provided with a memorandum from the Institute of Physics which says that, using the available figures,

"and making varied and realistic assumptions about both the demand for physics in schools and the supply of teachers to meet this demand in the next decade the alarming fact is that in constructing demand-supply graphs we did not find it possible to make the supply and the demand lines cross for any year in the decade."

That means that, throughout the 1990s, according to all the current information available, there will not be a sufficent supply of physics teachers.

The bursary scheme has played a small part in arresting the decline, but not in settling the problem of obtaining the extra teachers needed to match supply and demand. At least 25 per cent. of physics teachers have not entered teaching after completing their bursary period.

The Secretary of State mentioned with pride that an extra 5 per cent. of chemistry teachers were being recruited because of the bursary scheme. He omitted to mention that in 1988 there was a 42 per cent. shortage of chemistry teachers. Therefore, we have hardly begun to tackle the problem. Despite all the Government's initiatives, that remains the fundamental problem: they are nowhere near meeting the extra demands being placed on our schools and teachers by the national curriculum, the Elton report, the need for more INSET because of the need for more teachers in subjects in which teachers are in short supply, and the new forms of teacher training which will make demands on teachers in post and take them out of the classroom. I presume that teachers will receive such training in schools. Many more demands are being made on teachers' time, which means that many teachers will be unable to teach as much as they have in the past.

The Secretary of State was proud to mention the retraining. However, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has made it clear that

"It is not possible to obtain the needed high-quality specialist teachers of A-level mathematics, physics, chemistry and modern languages by hastily retraining surplus numbers of, for example, biology, home economics and physical education teachers."

I wish to raise a number of points relating to Wales. First, on secondary science, in a survey to which 80 per cent. of schools replied, 46 per cent. of those schools identified the need for extra science staff, and 46 of those schools specified that they would need 53 teachers. Extrapolating that information on a national scale, at a conservative estimate, a further 900 teachers would be needed immediately. I say a conservative estimate, because, in Wales, we are relatively well off compared to many other areas.

In Mid-Glamorgan, only 14 per cent. of pupils in the fourth and fifth years take GCSE Welsh as a second language and 15 per cent. take French. We can imagine the number of extra teachers that will be needed when everyone has to learn those two subjects. In that county, 1,931 teachers were surveyed on the question of teaching Welsh in primary schools. Of those, 362 were fluent Welsh speakers and 161 were Welsh learners, yet 1,144 were teaching Welsh and relying on their ability to read the language and follow basic language courses. A total of 493 were unable to teach Welsh at all, and more than 600 said that they would be prepared to go on beginners' learning courses.

The county council applied for £120,000, with a package of schemes to enable Welsh to be taught throughout the county. The Welsh Office provided £30,000. Lip service that is paid to the extension of the Welsh language is not being implemented, because the money is not being provided. It is the same throughout the education system. We badly need more money, because without it our education system is doomed to failure.

9.35 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): We have heard an important admission from the Secretary of State tonight. He made two comments that verified all our assertions that there are teacher shortages: he actually used that phrase, and he also said that there were serious problems in our schools. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), in his Trappist role, has decided that he knows more about the subject than the Secretary of State. Perhaps he is not alone in that: it appears that the Minister of State also feels that she knows more about it than her boss. She denies the Secretary of State's admission, which provides verification of our assumptions. When she replies to the debate, the Minister will also be replying to her own contribution at the annual conference of the Secondary Heads Association, which caused so much disquiet not just immediately to SHA but much more generally.

The Secretary of State was good enough to recognise the extent of the current shortages and the mounting evidence to support our assertions: for instance, the report of the interim advisory committee, the substantial work of Her Majesty's inspectorate—pointing yet again to shortages in science, maths, CDT and modern languages —and the HMI's important point that those shortages now extend beyond secondary schools into the primary sector, and challenge the ability to teach science as part of the national curriculum in the primary sector.

In a powerful contribution, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) talked about what the shortages meant for children in his constituency, who, in being denied access to a teacher, were being denied education. There are those absolute shortages, but there are also the hidden, suppressed shortages that are part of schools up and down the land, and part of the nature of our education. Too often, subjects are taught by non-specialist teachers. We know from figures given earlier from the secondary schools staffing survey that the problem has increased between 1984 and 1987. The Secretary of State has called himself Action Man, but some of that period fell during his stewardship, and there was still an increase in non-specialist staff teaching specialist subjects.

Another problem is the shift in curriculum that goes on in too many of our schools because they simply cannot staff themselves with the right sort of teachers for the curriculum that is necessary for the children. It is interesting to note that when, only two weeks ago, we debated the Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study in Science) Order 1989, the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), to justify 12·5 per cent. rather than 20 per cent. of the curriculum being devoted to science, said that the Government had to cut their cloth according to the acute shortage of teachers in science subjects.

All that is substantial evidence, and leads to a reduction in opportunities for our children and to a reduction of standards. All of those matters have been noticed by virtually everyone with any experience or knowledge of the education system. The only person who has missed out on this truth is the Minister of State. According to the *Times*

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

Educational Supplement editorial of 21 April, the Minister of State came up with comforting knowledge for all those schools suffering from teacher shortages. To the Minister of State it was simply a myth. The editorial stated that schools which had difficulty in recruiting good physicists, computing experts or modern linguists could now rest in peace. Their troubles were non-existent—just a myth, according to the Minister of State.

Of course, there were reactions to that statement. I do not know whether this is sanitised in the Department of Education and Science, but its press release at that conference from the Minister of State did not refer at all to the Minister's assertion that teacher shortages were simply a myth. *[Interruption.]* The Minister of State says that she did not say it. That is interesting, since the whole debate of the Secondary Heads Association centred on the use of her word "myth". The TES reporter also heard the word "myth".

Since she has denied saying this, the Minister of State may want to have a word, for instance, with Mrs. Averil Burgess, who chairs the Girls Schools Association and is headmistress of South Hampstead high school for girls. She was at the conference and heard the Minister of State speak. Although I do not want to do Mrs. Burgess an injustice, I suspect that she is not a subscribed and paid-up member of the Labour party, but she said that to suggest there were no shortages flew in the face of the facts. As reported in yesterday's *Times* she went on to give evidence to the Minister of State that her school was advertising a religious education post. Mrs. Burgess said that a few years ago such a job would have attracted 10 or more applicants, but at the moment there was only one applicant.

According to the Minister of State, it is a myth to talk about teacher shortages, but according to virtually everyone else with some knowledge of education and of the problems confronting teachers it is not a myth.

The Secretary of State has said that he will bring forward a set of proposals and a series of actions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said that this statement should be quantified by considering the number of additional teachers as a result of these measures. So far, those figures have not been given. Perhaps the Minister of State can give them at a later stage. However, we do know that, in its submission to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, the DES admitted that, in the middle of the 1990s, we will face an acute teacher shortage. The submission states that the teacher shortages will be in maths, physics, technology and modern languages, they will all be deep and they will all affect the ability to teach the national curriculum.

The figures given to the Select Committee were based on an increase of 20 per cent. recruitment into teaching. The Minister of State and the DES know that, in those specialised subjects, the Government has not been able to hit that target. Thus, the information given to the Select Committee was wrong, and will prove even more inaccurate as time goes on. We are facing an acute shortage of teachers and an acute shortage in certain subjects. The problem will grow and make it more difficult to deliver the national curriculum—*[Interruption.]* I find the chorus from Conservative Members well orchestrated but, as usual, typically empty.

Earlier today, the Secretary of State said that this was a week of national celebration. Some of my hon. Friends and I wondered whether that was because the Secretary of State's rating in the opinion polls had increased from 2 per cent. to 4 per cent., or whether it was because this Government had been in power for 10 years. The crucial point is that the Government have had the stewardship of education in this country for the last 10 years and are responsible for the decline in teacher numbers and for the inability to deliver.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No, I shall not give way.

The Secretary of State referred to the amount of money that he had spent on promoting teaching as a profession. It would have been extremely useful if the Government and Conservative Back Benchers had thought about the damage that they have inflicted on teacher morale and teacher professionalism. During the early life of this Government, all their actions were systemically designed to undermine teacher professionalism. There was an attack on teacher professionalism on every possible occasion at Question Time. The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) got it right tonight when he referred to the stresses and the problems faced by members of the teaching profession. I hope that he will educate a few of his fellow Back Benchers, although I realise that there are difficulties in doing so.

It is typical of the way the Government have treated teachers that at all times they have refused to take teachers into their confidence and to plan with teachers the delivery of the Education Reform Act and the national curriculum. They have adopted at all times a stand-off relationship with teachers. At all times, they have undermined the professionalism of teachers. The facts demonstrate that this country is suffering from a teacher shortage. The facts suggest, moreover, that we are damaging educational opportunities and standards.

In its editorial of 21 April the *Times Educational Supplement* said:

"It is hardly odd in the circumstances that, in their polite way, the secondary heads gave Mrs. Rumbold the bird."

The House is too polite to give the Minister of State the bird. However, on this occasion, as on every other, her response will be inadequate and will not address the problems and challenges that face the country. We want to hear the Minister say that she recognises the problems and will act. We do not want to hear her congratulating herself and pretending that teacher shortages are a myth. The evidence clearly supports the opposite view.

9.47 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): It has been an interesting and, at times, a thoughtful debate. Teacher supply is an important issue to which we must all accord the highest priority. More than that, it is an issue which the Department is handling in the most constructive and vigorous fashion.

We start from the foundation of what teaching is and what it is seen to be—a demanding, creative, professional and rewarding occupation. It is already a popular career option. There can be no doubt about that. The myth that teaching is not attractive is given the lie by the fact that

25,000 people enter or re-enter the teaching profession each year. There is a substantially lower wastage rate in the teaching profession than in any other profession.

I listened with great interest to what the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) had to say. I waited for his suggestions for meeting teacher shortages. Not a sausage, not an idea came from the hon. Gentleman. He is as barren of ideas on this subject as he is on many subjects. Since he put so much credibility on the *Times Educational Supplement*, perhaps he read the article this week, which described how a mature man, who had been an engineer and had been made redundant, spent six years training as a maths teacher with computer studies. He has sought work with a local authority which ring fences its applications for jobs. His local authority will not employ him. It has strange ways of employing teachers. He has tried to get employment up and down the country but he has had no success. He has been offered only voluntary work. This is a man trained to teach maths. We have acknowledged shortages in teachers of maths, amongst other subjects, in this country. What do the hon. Gentlemen say about that?

I say thank you to my right hon. and hon. Friends for their contributions. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) mentioned the report by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers on the quality of teachers for the future and I was glad of that, because it is important, of course, that it has some encouraging messages. As one might have expected following particularly good recruitment in 1987, the output of university-trained teachers increased over 1987, with an above average increase in the science shortage subjects and maths. Increases have not been at the expense of student quality, which continues to improve, and that is very good news indeed.

I also noted with approbation my hon. Friend's emphasis on the importance of changing what happens in initial teacher training so that the colleges match the training needed by people gaining experience in the classroom as well as outside, besides having good subject qualifications.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) talked of quality, and he will, I am sure, be glad to see the proposals for the initial teacher training for new young entrants which my right hon. Friend has just published. He is right to emphasise the importance of people who not only know their subject but have an ability to transmit that knowledge to children in the classroom. I noted also that he talked of teachers' pay, saying that teachers should be well paid. This is not something which the Government disagree with, especially as teachers over the past three years have had a 40 per cent. increase in pay. He makes a good point also in saying status is important.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister clear up what she said to the Secondary Heads Association, because I understand that she said she was misreported? The report of her speech quotes her as saying that we really need

"to nail this myth that teaching has difficulty in securing recruits and in retaining them when it does secure them."

Was that report accurate? If not, what did she say?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said at the beginning. What I said to the Secondary Heads Association was that the myth that teaching is not an attractive option was something that I wanted to nail. That is what I actually said. I cannot help it if the reporters do not hear me. I cannot help it if the secondary heads heard something else. Sometimes it is impossible to have discussions with people who do not wish to hear the messages one is putting across, and that includes, I have to say, Opposition Members.

I return to what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham. He made a very good point on the issue of the status of teachers, because it is important that the image of teachers is improved in the eyes of the parents and the employers, as well as those of the children. I have some sympathy with his views of children who watch too much television. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) was right to say that my right hon. Friend has admiration for and offers congratulations on the efforts and dedication of the teaching profession. I am sad that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) does not recognise this and complains that Ministers frequently do not congratulate or offer kind words to teachers. Sometimes I fear that it is like having a dialogue with the deaf to tell him what we are saying.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury was right to say there has been a reversal in some of the shortage subjects. As I have just said, the *Times Educational Supplement* last week mentioned a maths teacher who cannot get a job and my hon. Friend mentioned the shortage of teachers at his son's school, saying that when he discussed the matter with other parents many people came forward. I congratulate him on his interesting example of the London borough of Croydon which managed to recruit 12 good honours graduates for teaching science. That emphasises the point we have been making for several months that local education authorities that take trouble and are determined can recruit high-quality teachers who can make good contributions.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) talked of teacher shortages in Tower Hamlets. I acknowledge that there has been a problem and we are certainly discussing the matter with Tower Hamlets and considering proposals to tackle the problem in April 1990 when in becomes a local education authority. As the right hon. Gentleman pointed out, the local authority has managed to improve the numbers of children not in school from a regrettable 450 to about 250. Of course, I fully acknowledge that the new local education authorities will do everything to improve greatly that situation, which must be tackled properly.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) talked about the new challenges for teachers. He was absolutely correct to say that many teachers face a great deal of new work and new challenges in the classroom and in the management of their schools. But I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's view of the difficulties that that will present to teachers' morale. The GCSE demonstrated that teachers' morale was improved because they felt that together with the pupils, the parents and the employers, the effort that they put in to making that examination a great success was rewarded by the general public's approbation, by the parents' approbation and by the children's view that it was worth working hard at school. The new challenges that will be part of the teaching profession in future will be the teaching of national curriculum subjects, and the management of schools. All those matters will be undertaken in training and in-service training, but, most importantly, in talking to teachers so that they feel that it will be part of a morale-raising operation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do not doubt what the Minister of State said. I was arguing not that those challenges are damaging to morale, but that because of those challenges the rewards need to be greater and that because such challenges demand time, effort and activity there must be some compensation or teachers will not feel they can do all that we ask of them.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. No doubt that will be part and parcel of the outcome of the extra effort that is made. However, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Hillsborough that their objections to licensed teachers are rather sad. I believe that my right hon. Friend's suggestions for licensed teachers will improve the quality of people who enter the classroom at qualified teacher status. Instead of people coming to the classroom and receiving qualified teacher status without any experience, licensed teachers will be graduates or have higher education qualifications and will receive at least two years' training within the classroom. That is extremely important. We currently employ people who are not able to receive such training and who take up posts in schools without any teaching experience.

The opposition to my right hon. Friend's many initiatives to combat teacher shortages is quite incomprehensible. It cannot make sense to highlight areas where there are shortages of specialist teachers but then to rubbish every single idea to help alleviate the problem. The bursary scheme has helped to tackle teacher shortages in special subjects and the teaching as a career team in the Department of Education and Science has had considerable success in its roadshows and its advertising campaign to make sure that people come forward to be new teachers.

Many of the other proposals my right hon. Friend has outlined today prove that our Department is working hard to improve the supply of teachers. I ask the House to support the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 262.

Division No. 183] **[10 pm.**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas

Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Maline, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House notes the importance of recruiting sufficient well qualified teachers, in particular for the implementation of the national curriculum; welcomes the vigorous measures which the Government has introduced to this end; welcomes the clear indication of the success of these measures; welcomes the measures the Government is taking to make teacher training more rigorous, more practical and more responsive to the needs of schools; and commends the Government's intention to continue to take whatever action is needed to ensure a continuing supply of high quality teachers.

Official Secrets Bill (Allocation of Time)

10.15 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That the Order of the House [13th February] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of the Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 13th February, those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion not later than the expiration of the period of two hours beginning with the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair.

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted at any time by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

The time has come for the House to consider the Lords amendments to the Bill—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members at the Bar either come into the Chamber or leave quietly?

Mr. Hurd: The purpose of the motion before the House is to make the necessary provision for this discussion. There can be nothing unusual or unexpected about it. It is normal, when a timetable has been agreed, to introduce a supplementary motion when the time comes for Lords amendments. Of all the 47 timetable motions since June 1970, so far as I can discover, all of them have been supplemented by further motions.

Obviously, the motion is not an occasion for debate on substance and you, Mr. Speaker, would rapidly pull me up if I launched into one. I doubt, anyway, that in the time available I would manage to dispel all the nightmares in which the critics of the Bill on all sides of the House have preferred to wrap themselves. Only the light of day could do that. When the Bill becomes law and the critics find its operation much closer to my explanations than to their nightmares, they will see the light. I do not expect a glass of champagne from my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken); a mere nod of acknowledgement when that day comes will suffice.

It is proper to say one word about timing and to emphasise the point that the House has had plenty of opportunity to discuss the measure. The Government White Paper, which came before the Bill, was debated for five hours last July. We debated the Second Reading of the Bill in just under six hours and then we had 28 hours in Committee, which was on the Floor of the House. It is worth reminding the House that the first debates of that Committee, on 25 January, when we took the special

offence contained in clause 1 of the Bill and notification, and on 2 February when we spent a full day, if I recall correctly, on the question of the public interest defence and the different amendments moved to that effect, took place without any limitation on time. We then had five hours on the remaining stages. In all, the Chamber has heard 39 hours of debate on a Bill that, although of high importance, which is why it was taken on the Floor—and has certainly turned out to be more controversial than I had hoped—nevertheless has just 16 clauses.

The motion allows ample time. All the amendments were passed in another place without a Division. Eight of the 10 amendments were tabled by the Government in response to proposals made or warmly supported by the Opposition spokesmen. The spokesmen declared themselves satisfied that the amendments tabled met the points that they had raised. The other two amendments are technical drafting changes and it was not considered in another place that they raised any issue requiring discussion, let alone Division.

It is reasonable to move forward to consider the amendments. I hope that the House will decide that they deserve to be supported and that the timetable motion allows time for such debates. I invite the House to agree to the motion.

10.18 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): There are times when a Government are right to seek a guillotine on a Bill—usually when opposition has been no more than a filibuster and no points of real substance have been raised. That is not the case with this Bill, either tonight or during its earlier stages. If there has been a filibuster, it has been done by the Government and the only reason for tonight's supplemental gag on debate is that the Government still have no real answers to the points raised from the Opposition and by some of the Government's right hon. and hon. Friends.

It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the Bill the Government have treated the House with contempt. They do so again tonight. There is no need for this guillotine and there was no need for it earlier. It was the Government who, each day, decided how long the House sat, who drew stumps earlier than predicted and who then resorted to this form of gag. Why they have done so again tonight remains a mystery. We were allowed a single, pointless amendment, despite the force of the arguments on public interest defence, prior publication and the need to make more specific the various tests of harm or damage. The other place was generously allowed a whole 10 amendments—maybe two of which were of minor importance, the rest being matters of no more than clarity or drafting.

I have said before and I repeat tonight that there is a consensus among all parties in this House on sensible reform of the Official Secrets Act 1911. The only people to whom that consensus does not apply are the Government. That is why they have taken refuge in the guillotine. Shorn of any sensible argument or defence, they substitute brutal force for debate. No wonder the weekend polls on the 10th anniversary of the Government's election found that a majority in all parties felt that the country had become more authoritarian and more centralised under the Government. That is certainly the case here.

Time was, and yes, even in the early days of this Government, when the Chief Whip or Leader of the House would go to the Prime Minister to say that amendments should be accepted to respect the strength of feeling and debate. That no longer happens and it is the Government who suffer most from that, not the Opposition, as voters in the Vale of Glamorgan will make clear on Thursday.

Let me just ask the Home Secretary this: what is the need for this guillotine tonight? Against whom is it aimed? What it shows is that the Government are frightened of debate and challenge either from the Labour Benches or from the friendless Benches behind them. The guillotine means that we shall have no chance to debate the future of the D notice committee—just as we had no chance to do so during the Bill's earlier stages. Its future is highly relevant. On 22 February, Rear-Admiral William Higgins, the D notice committee secretary based at the Ministry of Defence, spelt out in an interview in *The Independent*:

"Now they"—

that is editors—

"will have to have greater concern for the law".

He added:

"Under the new legislation, an editor must know that what he publishes damages national security. If I tell him it isn't damaging, he's got a good defence. If I tell him it is damaging, and he goes ahead and publishes, then that will be a firm platform in the prosecution's evidence."

In other words, that form of self-censorship—that is what the D notice committee represents—now has new and more menacing substance. It puts Rear-Admiral Higgins into the witness box against editors with whom he is trying to run that voluntary system. What does that do to the D notice committee? Mr. Mike Ramsden, editor in chief of *Flight International* and chairman of the press and broadcasting side of the committee, revealed that when the Government ludicrously sought to ban the BBC radio programme "My Country, Right or Wrong," after Rear-Admiral Higgins had cleared it, the media threatened to withdraw its voluntary support from the committee.

"We have unanimously concluded that it would make the D-Notice system unworkable. The proposed legislation is an extension of secrecy, not freedom of information."

Under the guillotine we shall be unable to get answers on that matter. It also means that we shall be unable to discuss a report in today's edition of *The Independent* that Mr. Desmond Bristow, former chief of counter-intelligence in south-east Europe until 1954, plans to do a "Peter Wright" and publish a book from his home in Spain claiming that British intelligence was riddled with traitors. Will the Minister explain, how, under this measure, the Government would deal with that matter, since it contains no powers to prosecute British citizens living abroad, and extradition does not seem be be possible for alleged offences?

It seems that the Government might be about to face another Wright case, wandering around the courts of the world to uphold a lifelong duty of confidentiality and running up large bills to no avail in the process. Yet again, people abroad will be able to know what is being alleged while people in this country will not know. I want the Minister to clarify that, especially as Mr. Bristow is quoted as saying:

"The CIA and MI6 were equals before. Now they're not. The CIA does not share its super-secret stuff with us any more. Personally, I don't blame them."

It is almost as though Mr. Bristow has now joined Mr. Peter Wright in being the real author of this measure, the purpose of which is to reassure the Americans that we can

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keep secrets, and to save the Government's face. It is as though, perhaps by accident, we have discovered the main purpose of the Bill.

The Government may win—temporarily—here, but those of us who oppose the Bill, because of the way in which the Government have dealt with it, are secure in the knowledge that we shall win in the end. Despite the earlier words of the Home Secretary, I predict that when a jury comes to consider these provisions in relation to a prosecution, it will treat this new measure with the same derision and scorn as earlier juries have treated the Act that it seeks to replace.

I urge all hon. Members who care for the proper traditions of this House to join my hon. Friends and me in the Lobby to protest against this further guillotine.

10.27 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I confess that I have some doubt as to whether the electors in the Vale of Glamorgan will be moved as much perhaps as they should be by the issue that is before the House tonight.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is a big issue.

Mr. Amery: I agree, and perhaps it would be better if they were so moved, but it would be foolish to base whatever feelings we may have on this occasion on their presence.

I do not want to burden the House again with renewing the arguments that I adduced when the Bill was in Committee and on Report. I simply recall that I said then that in relation to the publication of memoirs by former members of the secret services, there was an old and time-honoured formula that they would be submitted to authority and censured, if necessary, by the powers responsible.

When I put that forward as an alternative to the lifelong duty of confidentiality, the Minister of State gave me assurances which met all my objections. I regret that those assurances were afterwards withdrawn by the Secretary of State. However, these are administrative decisions and I would like to think that after the debates here and in the other place, when the time comes for administrative actions to be taken, those authorities will be guided by what the Minister of State said in reply to me rather than by the absolute doctrine of lifelong confidentiality to which the Secretary of State returned. I know well that we cannot win a vote tonight and that nothing we can do or that any of my right hon. or hon. Friends on either side can do will change the Government's mind.

I do not like imploring the Executive but I will tonight. There are several books in the pipeline, some of which I know about. When the time comes, I hope that the administrative function will be exercised in the right way. If it is not, some of us, myself included, will make a bit of trouble in each and every case. I do not want to go beyond that. I simply ask my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister to have in mind the feelings that the House and the other place have expressed, and not least the view of Lord Home, whose authority in these matters should carry a good deal of weight. The administrative function should be exercised pragmatically and sensibly and not on any rigid view of lifelong confidentiality or unacceptability. The Government should let the administrative function be exercised in the good old, reasonable way in which it was before.

10.31 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The right hon Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) has made a concluding, forlorn appeal to the Government. He knows better than anybody in the House that what future administrators and the courts will take into account is what is written in legislation and not what was said in answer to him or to others in debates. The right hon. Gentleman made a powerful intervention in previous debates. After we had heard his speech and the original response from the Government, most of us thought that that would be reconfirmed. His argument was overwhelming.

When I read some of the debates in the other place and what was said by eminent historians, who were applying their minds to exactly the same problem as the right hon. Gentleman, I thought that the Government could have made some response. But they made none. They used their majority in the other place in the same way as they had used it in this House to vote down any plea such as that made so forcibly by the right hon. Gentleman that originally it was approved by the Home Secretary, only to be modified later. The Home Secretary seems to think that I have misinterpreted what he said. Certainly the right hon. Member for Pavilion thinks that there was a great difference between the Government's first and second response.

The Bill has come back to this place in the last moments before it is to become an Act in a form which takes no account of that whole exchange or of the argument of the right hon. Gentleman about lifetime confidentiality and all that it may imply. It is not for protecting spies but for protecting the proper discussion of what has happened in the past on numerous occasions. I gave an illustration myself. I need only repeat the name. If such a provision had been applied to Winston Churchill, the publication of large sections of what he thought it was necessary and right to publish for the British people would not have been permitted. The right hon. Gentleman nods his head. He had the support of two or three historians in the other place who put that case as well. It is a wretched affair.

That is one aspect. It is not the sole important one, as I am sure the right hon. Member for Pavilion will agree, but it is a most important one, and I am not trying to diminish it. The Government have not moved an inch to meet the whole of that argument. The same thing applies to a range of questions mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

We are not talking solely about tonight's proceedings, but tonight's proceedings are a disgrace to both Houses of Parliament. I am not sure which Chamber bears the most severe guilt. The Government bear the primary guilt in both cases because it is on their recommendation in both Houses that the measure has been put through in this way.

I have seen a number of guillotine motions of my own. If I do not mention them others might be tempted to do so, so I shall take prophylactic action by dealing with that in a second.

There is no need for this squalid little guillotine motion now. We cannot have any lengthy debate. The debate may have been slightly more extensive without the guillotine,

but because the Government think that they can ram the Bill through with a guillotine that is what they do. If we allow this guillotine motion tonight, it will automatically become part of our proceedings. Whenever a Bill which has been subjected to the guillotine procedure returns to the House from the other place the guillotine will automatically be applied again. That is wrong. We could have debated this matter without that, so the guillotine motion is squalid on those accounts.

I happened to come across *The Sunday Times* at the weekend. Some hon. Members may have read the interview that the noble Lord Whitelaw gave to Mr. Brian Walden, or which Mr. Brian Walden gave to Lord Whitelaw—I am not sure which way round it was. The interview seemed designed to ensure that Lord Whitelaw's memoirs were brightened up. I am not saying anything against Lord Whitelaw. I have the greatest possible affection for him. Brian Walden is a skilful journalist, but the object seemed to be to brighten up the Whitelaw memoirs. I hope that that association will continue in the weeks to come.

I was a little surprised, if not flattered, to read that when Lord Whitelaw was discussing the way in which the Government were proceeding to ram their huge legislative programme through the House of Commons and the other place without any proper respect for the way in which matters should proceed, he said that I was responsible because I had made the guillotine respectable. The Leader of the House nods his head as if he is acting on that basis. He had better not act on that basis in future because it shows a complete misunderstanding of the situation.

It is a very different thing to have a guillotine when the Government have a majority of only one or two, when they will not get any legislation through at all without some form of guillotine at certain stages. Even so, the Labour Government's guillotine motions were much more relaxed than the ones that this Government have imposed. If we had not used the guillotine we would not have carried through any legislation. That is not the Government's situation. The Leader of the House could get a huge amount of legislation through—perhaps not all of it would have been beneficial—without use of the guillotine. Even Lord Whitelaw agrees with that. He thinks that it would have been much better if some of these ridiculous Bills had not been rammed through both Houses.

If only the Leader of the House had thought a bit more carefully he could have satisfied me and Lord Whitelaw at the same time. I should have thought that that was a most estimable aim for any Leader of the House to have. But the right hon. Gentleman forfeited any chance of getting such unanimous support. He has such a love of guillotines now that he will hardly allow any measure to go through the House without applying one. He does not think that the constitutional process is being applied unless a guillotine motion is applied at every stage. I am trying to prevent such a procedure becoming accepted.

But seriously, I believe that the procedures on this Bill are a disgrace to both Houses. We had good debates in this House. Anyone who listened to them all, or most of them, as I did, will know that they were excellent debates. Nobody could doubt that the weight of opinion was against the Government, but not the weight of the votes, of course. Therefore, when the legislation passed to the other place, the House of Lords should have taken that into account. If there is to be a second Chamber to survey what happens in this House, that was the time for it to do so. If there was to be any attempt by the House of Lords to mitigate what Lord Hailsham calls the elective dictatorship, that was when it should have happened.

However, Lord Hailsham does not seem to have exercised his rights in the other place. He still has the capacity to speak there but he is so intimidated by the elective dictatorship that he did not defend any of these matters. That is a great pity because he might have persuaded some others if he had had the nerve, courage and assiduity to put his case. We might not have been presented with this fait accompli now.

Nobody will take the House of Lords seriously in the future if it cannot exercise any second opinion on a measure such as this. When there is overwhelming opinion in the debates in the House of Commons against the Government's proposals which involve matters of central constitutional problems, and the House of Lords says that it will vote through the legislation, even against most of the weight of the debate in that House, it seems that the Government have an even bigger automatic majority in the second Chamber than here. The Home Secretary shakes his head, but of course the Government have a greater majority there if they summon all the backwoodsmen. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the figures on the poll tax legislation he will see that that is true. If the Government seek to continue to use their automatic majorities in both Houses against the major tone of the debate, they will do great injury to the constitution of our country.

Mr. Amery: The right hon. Gentleman is in danger of turning our discussion into an argument against the other place. I hope that he will forgive me if I recall that the first time that I met him was at dinner at Lord Beaverbrook's house. When the right hon. Gentleman came in, Lord Beaverbrook said, "Here is Robespierre. Whose head are you going to cut off today?" That brings me back to the subject of the guillotine.

If the right hon. Gentleman looks into the matter, he will see that the argument that he has made is just as true about the other place as it is about this one. The weight of the argument has been consistently, here and there, in favour of what we have been saying. I beg and pray the Ministers to take account of that, and, when they come to take their administrative decisions, to take account of what has been said by the right hon. Gentleman and some Conservative Members.

Mr. Foot: I happily adopt the second part of the right hon. Gentleman's argument because it happens to be the same as my own, but not the first part of it. There is no doubt that in both Houses the weight of the argument has been against the Government's proposition. However, the Government have not taken any account of either House. Therefore, I take the matter slightly further than the right hon. Gentleman and say that that is a condemnation of the other House, as well as this one. We cannot put all the blame on the Government's shoulders, although we can put most of it there.

I do not support the other place. I am in favour of doing away with it, and this is another reason why. When it comes to the crunch, to essential issues, and when Tory Ministers have made up their minds, they always have the obedient House of Lords at their disposal, even on a question on which there is such strong argument against the Executive. In the past few weeks the House of Lords

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has missed a great opportunity to carry powerful debates to votes, and when the reckoning comes that will have to be taken into account. The other place is now as subject to the whims and determinations of the Government as is the Cabinet itself.

That, I suppose, is what Lord Hailsham—in his way—was trying to describe as the elective dictatorship. There ought to be some members of the Government who would try to revolt against it; instead, we have this squalid little motion—an attempt to force through late at night, when hon. Members have just returned from a stay in the country, a measure that has been torn apart every time the House has had a chance to debate it. The Government have brought it back, saying, "We shall ram this through again, and ram it through the other place, and we shall go on until—perhaps—the constitution is bust wide open."

The Government are making a great mistake. If they will not listen to me, they should listen to the right hon. Member for Pavilion or all the other Conservative Members who—I guess—will press the case as strongly as we did in our previous debates. They are making a great mistake even from their own point of view, although I shall not lose any sleep on that account. I shall lose sleep because I believe that they are twisting the constitution to suit the interests of the elective dictatorship.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the House that we must conclude this part of our proceedings by 11.14 pm.

10.46 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I suppose that as realists we must accept that, whatever is said tonight, bitter experience tells us that the Government will not take the slightest notice. In my wildest moments earlier this evening, I reflected that a debate such as this might just as well be taking place in the saloon bar of a public house; and if I were looking for a name for that public house I would call it the Coach and Horses. I shall explain the reason later.

I did two things this morning when I woke up. First I opened my post, and found a review copy of a book entitled "The Blake Escape: How We Freed George Blake —And Why", by Pat Pottle and Michael Randle. Those two individuals proclaimed to the world last week that they had assisted in the escape of someone who had been sentenced to 42 years' imprisonment. The Bill will not have the slightest impact on that extraordinarily blatant advertisement for their self-confessed illegal activity. They have not been prosecuted, nor have they been given notice that they will be. Surely an Official Secrets Act could at least do that.

Why the "Coach and Horses"? After I had read some of the book I turned to *The Independent*, where I discovered that Desmond Bristow was preparing to write a book. Desmond Bristow has given long service to this country. If there had been a system under which he could submit his manuscript to the authorities and ensure that no lives would be endangered, he would have done so. The fact remains that the Government have consistently ignored all the pleas from both sides of the House for them to face reality and bring in a sensible system like the one in the United States, perhaps a publications review board. Surely that would be sensible.

The Government's objective in a Bill of this kind must surely be to protect information and to ensure that no information is released that would be dangerous. I am sorry: I believe that I cannot use the word "endanger", but must use "jeopardise". Or is it vice versa? Either way, that is surely the objective. Even while this Bill is being debated, we know that it is an abject failure. We will not achieve that very important objective. To dispose of the Peter Wright red herring once and for all, I point out that that case would not be affected at all by either the Bill or the proposed amendments.

So, who is behind the Home Secretary? Who is behind the Government? Who is proposing these extraordinary changes?

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): It is a secret, but the name begins with "M".

Mr. Allason: I am glad that my hon. Friend is covered by parliamentary privilege, because in other circumstances he might be back in the Old Bailey, of which he has some knowledge. I believe that those behind the measure are the same people who advised the Prime Minister when Anthony Blunt's name was going to be bandied about in the courts in a defamation case. On that occasion, they advised the Prime Minister that Anthony Blunt should be protected and his name not disclosed. Those same people advised the Lord Privy Seal in 1956 that Kim Philby was not under any suspicion. Those same people advised the Prime Minister that there was no evidence of post-war Soviet penetration of the security and intelligence services.

This Bill is surely intended to protect secret information and to ensure that former members of the security and intelligence services follow a particular way of getting clearance to write their books. Of course, such books have been published in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we are discussing the allocation of time motion. So far, he has not addressed that motion.

Mr. Allason: I shall be brief. Suffice it to say that the Home Secretary said that he would give permission originally for people to publish. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has subsequently said that only in rare and exceptional circumstances would that situation change.

I believe that the objective of the Bill has been lost. I am very sympathetic to the plea by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who has been pressing the point I am making. In future we are likely to see authors prosecuted and journalists going to prison. We have recently seen the spectre in the Salman Rushdie case of books being banned and burnt. We should not put ourselves in such a position. We will certainly be doing so if the Bill goes any further.

10.53pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): There is some irony in the fact that we are debating the guillotine motion, and that it is only because of that motion that we are able once again to draw attention to the enormity of the Bill. Had the Home Secretary not felt inclined to follow the 47 timetable motions, we should no doubt have had to confine ourselves to the narrow ambit of the amendments from another place that we shall shortly be considering. That would certainly not have been an appropriate way in which to end the debate in this House of a Bill which was a substitute for the freedom of information legislation that this country needs to complete its effective democracy.

The Bill, so long in consideration, has been condemned on all sides. It has been condemned by the leading newspapers of the country and by the vast majority of those who have spoken in the debates in this House and in another place.

The Home Secretary spoke, albeit briefly, on the substance of the Bill. His speech resembled a guttering candle that did nothing to illuminate the debate. It left a somewhat acrid smell. It reminded us that the right hon. Gentleman, who began his term of office as Home Secretary with a somewhat liberal reputation, has systematically, through his legislative activities, destroyed it. In this Bill he has ensured that the law will be an ass. It will be set aside by juries. Public servants, notwithstanding the rubrics of the Bill, will put at the forefront of their mind public interest in the truth and the need to reveal wrongdoing. That is the subject which we wished to ventilate again. The country knows that the Government have stifled that debate. It is that debate which the Home Secretary has so slightingly dispensed with throughout.

Parliament has been made merely a cipher in the proceedings. Time and again hon. Members have been required simply to march through the Lobbies. They have seen the sense in opening up these matters set at naught by

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

a Government who have been humiliated in the courts and who have then sought a legislative riposte to the defeats that they have suffered.

It would be better if the Bill were not enacted in its present form. Those who have the important task of keeping secret those things that ought to be kept secret will be under tension as to where their duty lies. When public servants smell wrongdoing they will, I have no doubt, reveal it. It will be their duty to do so. In doing so, they will reveal the folly of the Government's actions.

I thank the Home Secretary for providing us with this final opportunity to pass comment on his miserable measure. It is a measure which will do his repute no good in the eyes of those who care about freedom in this country.

10.57 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): There was a charming moment earlier, if I heard it correctly, when the former leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the Home Secretary were exchanging reminiscences about the quality of their guillotines. It was a curious moment of sophistry.

I do not go along with the former Leader of the Opposition if he maintains that the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act—TULRA 1 and TULRA 2—are at the heart of our democratic and accountable processes and the rights and liberties of citizens. That is not how I see it. Fortunately, the European Court found otherwise. It found that that is an unacceptable law.

The guillotine is a subject which exercises the minds of thoughtful Conservatives. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House listed for us the number of guillotines that it has been necessary for the Government to impose to expedite business. The number of measures of great importance that the Government no longer feel that they have the ability to argue is shaming. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made much of the fact that 28 hours in Committee and 39 hours in total have been devoted to a measure which touches on the fundamental liberty of the citizens of this state.

I have been reading a book by the father of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). Leo Amery reveals his thoughts on the constitution in his book and makes an observation about British democracy by referring to Burke. He says that our system of parliamentary democracy is not about mere arithmetical majorities. It is not a question of $x + 2 + 1$. It is a reaching-out process to try to obtain consent and agreement to the great measures that affect our liberty. Why the Government should eschew that on such a fundamental issue I do not understand. This trivial concept that 39 hours is a breathtaking allocation of time is refuted by our own contemporary evidence.

Again, L. S. Abrey in "Thoughts on the Constitution" observed that the Labour Government passed 70 pieces of legislation in the very first parliamentary Session after the war, and most of those were taken on the Floor of the House. Indeed, the Cable and Wireless nationalisation measure had two days on Second Reading, yet this Government feel it necessary to impose a guillotine after 13 hours.

Those of us who have followed the progression of the Bill through the House know why a guillotine was rushed in. The performance of the Minister of State explaining why it was necessary to have powers to designate any person rather than merely Crown servants and Crown contractors and giving, after three hours of debate, the one instance he could think of—the Security Commission, whose members are Privy Councillors and within the circle of secrecy—begs questions as to what the Government was fearful of. Argument was the answer, and it will serve us ill as Conservatives if we have to drive through legislation without being certain and confident of the basis of the argument on which we do it.

The Bill is deeply flawed, and sensitive individuals within the Government know that it is atrocious. As Lord Dacre of Glanton said in another place, it contains principles that this nation rejected by participation in the Nuremberg trials. These are how fundamental the measures are that touch on these very freedoms. That is why it was the right of good Conservatives across the country to expect the House to fulfil one of its principal and primary roles, which is a line-by-line scrutiny of legislation. "Not a bit," say the Government, "We cannot afford this nonsense. After all, we could do away with Parliament altogether. There is nothing in our constitution that insists that we have a First, Second and Third Reading."

We could hand our votes over the Whips Office as soon as we come by power of attorney and go away for four years. I can see my hon. Friends the Whips finding this a most agreeable function. It would simplify government, but it would deny the very concept we want out of this, which is that the Parliament of this country represents the viewpoint of informed, intelligent citizens to ensure those things that we account important, including accountable government. If Government do not have to argue for their contentions, we do not have accountable government. The Government turned their face on those very arguments.

I cannot but support amendments that I wish the Government had introduced or accepted in consultation with the House. The concept of a damage test going from "prejudices" to "endangers" is to be welcomed, and it is something on which the Government could have reached agreement across the country and secured some form of good will for.

I know that my right hon. Friend constantly said that there were important members of my own party who were deeply nervous about this being a dangerously liberal piece of legislation, and he cited my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). When I saw my right hon. Friend earlier I thought that he was going to come in to vote down the Government's stern liberalisation of clause 2 and clause 3 in the raising of the damage test, but it is unfortunate that this badly flawed Bill will limp out of here with a great deal of scorn for the worst of reasons. This was something the Government could have argued, accommodated and had a consensus on across the Floor of the House. I hope that in future my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will recall that for us to reach out and secure consent is the firmest foundation for the rights and authorities of an Executive to lead our country, and that is an important principle which the Government are denying.

10.58 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It seemed to me, both from occasional visits and from reading the Lords debate, that those Lords who know most about it on the Conservative side were precisely those who were most critical. Hugh Trevor-Roper is not exactly a Socialist, but he was only one of a number with real knowledge of intelligence matters who have made a study of these things, who was most deeply critical.

I want to ask one question. In his opening speech, the Home Secretary seemed jolly sure that it would work out as he suggested, rather than as the rest of us who have taken an interest believed. He suggested that it would work out far nearer his proposals. If that is the case, how will Parliament monitor the operation of the legislation? We are very bad at monitoring what we have done. I should like to hear—not necessarily tonight—that the Government will at least consider giving us the opportunity, on the basis of a short annual report on the working of their Act, of knowing how it has worked out. If they are so certain, there is no reason why they should not put it to an annual parliamentary test.

11.2 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Although I share the strong sentiments of indignation which have been expressed so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), at this late hour I cannot sustain the tone of high moral seriousness which, quite rightly, has run through the speeches of hon. Members from both sides of the House.

The timetable motion reminds me of one of the few examples of judicial wit in an official secrets case. I refer to a very small official secrets case in 1938 involving a journalist in Yorkshire called Driffield who was prosecuted for the heinous crime of collaborating with a GPO telephonist to get stories about police activities for the local paper. He was prosecuted under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act for receiving official information and faced a term of imprisonment. The Attorney-General of the day came up to prosecute him, but the judge in charge of the case did not think much of that and said that the Official Secrets Act was never meant to be used for such a purpose. Towards the end of his summing-up, he leaned across the bench and said, "Mr. Attorney-General, I hope that such a case will never be brought again. If you have to kill a field mouse, it is not always necessary to use a field gun."

I have a vision of the Cabinet Committee discussing the tactics in Parliament on the Lords Amendments saying to each other, "Come on boys, we have to go big-game hunting in Parliament tonight to kill a field mouse. How shall we do it? We had better summon up the heavy artillery, the King's Troop, the big berthas and the howitzers, and put down a long timetable motion." I have had time to count it and it is nearly 750 words long and covers 68 lines on the Order Paper. What is it all about? It is about passing a two-line amendment to delete the word, "jeopardise" and insert the word "endangers"—the very amendment which was suggested on the Floor of the House and totally rejected by the "Three Men in a Boat" team in charge of the Bill's destiny. I cannot imagine what paranoia or insecurity made them think that it was necessary to wheel up the field guns to kill a field mouse, to blast the enemies of the Bill out of the water once and for all.

The term "field mouse" is pretty appropriate. If I can draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary away from his personal correspondence, being a classical scholar he will remember the words of the poet Horace in "Ars Poetica":

"parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus."

which, if I may translate for the benefit of my fellow Old Etonians, who are mostly among the Opposition, means:

"The mountains have been in labour, they have brought forth a ridiculous mouse."

What a ridiculous mouse the Bill has turned out to be.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) pointed out that he read in *The Independent* this morning about a new book being produced by a new overseas author. The whole purpose of the Bill was to give Peter Wright and his successors a jolly good whacking so that they would never do it again, but a Mr. Bristow in Marbella is about to do it all over again. My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who is always in the forefront of receiving secret information, is receiving through his letter box books about Blake which cannot be stopped, and future novels. Nothing can be done about them. A ridiculous mouse has been born, but it cannot be killed even by the heavy field artillery on the Treasury bench. What a farce we are taking part in.

11.9 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is rather unfortunate that the Government seem to be doing so many disagreeable things late at night. We discuss funny Euro-regulations over which Parliament has no control at this time of night so that nobody knows about them.

I want to put one brief point to the Government. What on earth is the point of bringing forward a guillotine on this matter when we are discussing Lords amendments that are unlikely to provoke any disagreement in the House, but about which we need a considerable amount of information? Amendment No. 4, which involves changing "jeopardises" to "endangers" for international relations, is vital because we know that among international relations, we are talking about Britain's relations with the European Community. The amendment would make an enormous difference. I would like to know a great deal about it, but if we have a guillotine, how do we learn that information?

We also want to know why such a major change is proposed for clauses 2 and 3—and consequently for clause 5—but not for clause 4, which deals with crime and special investigation, especially when we bear in mind the recent activities of the serious fraud squad. I suggest that the reason is that the Government faced huge hostility during earlier debates on the Bill on the principles we discussed and we are dealing tonight with detailed and important amendments.

If our discussions are to be contracted unnecessarily tonight, could we have a clear assurance that the Government will give a full statement—perhaps in written answers—of the consequences of each of the amendments? To people who study them, they seem to be significant. They are not amendments that we seek to oppose, but about which we need to know the consequences. Bearing in mind that voting is unlikely, I hope that the Government will withdraw the motion and let us get on with the job of simply asking questions.

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 110.

Division No. 184] **[11.11 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Aitken, Jonathan
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'm'line E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Order of the House [13 February] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of the Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and,

subject to the provisions of the Order of 13th February, those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion not later than the expiration of the period of two hours beginning with the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forthwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair.

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6.—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which it is appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If the proceedings are interrupted at any time by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Official Secrets Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 1

SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 2, line 18, at end insert—

"( ) Subject to subsection (7) below, a notification for the purposes of subsection (1) above shall be in force for the period of five years beginning with the day on which it is served but may be renewed by further notices under subsection (6) above for periods of five years at a time."

11.23 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendment No. 2.

Mr. Patten: The amendments provide that a notification shall expire after a period of five years from the date on which the notification is served unless it is renewed or previously revoked. The amendments follow closely the substance of amendments tabled by Opposition parties in another place and I note that the Opposition spokesman in another place, Lord Elwyn-Jones, said that he accepted these amendments with pleasure.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would this be the right moment to ask the Minister whether he has any sympathy at all, not with a five-year period, but with some kind of annual report back to the House on the actual mechanics of the operation of the Act that he hopes to put through?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): If any of the amendments have any substance, which is open to doubt, perhaps it is these two. The Minister and I have had exchanges on this matter. The Bill creates a class of individuals or groups who can be notified that they are subject to the provisions of the Bill. In other words, they will be civil servants in other Government Departments who come into contact with the security and intelligence services or Government contractors. The Home Secretary, who regrettably has had to leave us, said at one stage that there was no intention of designating groups of people. I believe that that was an exercise in semantics. It is obvious that a class of people in a particular office and grade—for example, in the Home Office or the Ministry of Defence —who, by the nature of their work, would have regular contact with the intelligence and security services, would, although not named as a group for notification, make up such a group.

The Minister will remember that it was in paragraph 47 of the White Paper that the notion of the designation of individuals or groups was first postulated, although, as I said, the Home Secretary denied that later. I do not want to make heavy weather of this. We will not know how many people are told that they are notified persons or whether they are told that they are no longer notified persons. No distinction is made in the Bill about the weight or class of the information that those people would have come across in the course of their duties. If they have come across it, that is that.

I welcome the five-year renewal of the notification, but can the Minister assure the House that notification under the Bill will be kept to the absolute sensible minimum, in line with the Government's ambitions for the Bill? Can he assure us that when it comes to deciding whether notification should be extended for a further five-year period, the power to prolong notification will be used even more sparingly than in the first instance? Clearly, time changes the relevance and importance of the information which perhaps led to the decision to notify in the first place. The Minister would help the House if he could give those assurances.

Mr. John Patten: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has taken a close interest in the proceedings of the whole of the Bill. Of course, it would be open to him or to any other hon. Member, or a Select Committee, at any stage during the parliamentary cycle to submit the workings of the Official Secrets Act, if such it is at that stage, to examination.

I remember the exchanges between the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and myself in Committee on the Floor of the House. I do not think that I can add anything to the explanation of the people who may be notified to that which he will find recorded in the *Official Report* of 25 January 1989 at columns 1128-29. I can certainly give the undertaking that only those people who need to be notified will be notified.

Mr. Dalyell: I appreciate the spirit in which the Minister has said that, but I think that he has forgotten what Back-Bench life is like. I do not know how he can say that it is up to me or anybody else to scrutinise the Bill. Week after week we apply for Adjournment debates, and we may or may not be lucky. I submit that that is not a satisfactory way of dealing with something which should be monitored by Parliament on a regular basis.

The other alternative was that it should be submitted to a Select Committee. Which Select Committee?

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to what the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has said, on a number of occasions the Lord President has made it plain that Ministers will not answer questions about security matters in the House. The Minister's statement tonight does not lie nicely with such previous statements.

11.30 pm

Mr. John Patten: Both hon. Gentlemen are chasing after the wrong hare. The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked what were the opportunities for keeping the workings of the Act under review. The House provides many opportunities for the workings of Acts to be kept under review.

Mr. Dalyell: Which Select Committee?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dalyell: I am sorry, but I asked a question about which Select Committee.

Mr. Patten: The Defence Select Committee might wish to interest itself in the workings of some parts of the Official Secrets Act because of its interest in defence security. A range of Select Committees look at the workings of different Acts that concern the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 2 agreed to.

Clause 2

DEFENCE

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 2, line 41, leave out "jeopardises" and insert "endangers".

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendment No. 4.

Mr. Patten: The amendments replace the word "jeopardises" in the international relations harm test in clauses 2 and 3 with the word "endangers". The amendments respond to the suggestion in the other place that "endangers" might be clearer to juries than "jeopardises". The Opposition parties in another place fully supported that suggestion and the names of members of those parties appeared on the Order Paper with that of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State in support. That was a welcome touch of unanimity in our consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am sure that the Minister will accept that the amendments are significant. They strengthen the basis on which we could regard something as damaging. It is interesting that they affect almost every clause in the Bill, except one. That is significant and important.

Clause 2 contains the word jeopardises, which will be affected by the amendments. In clause 3(2) the word jeopardises is replaced by endangers. Clause 5(3) contains the words "the disclosure . . . is damaging" and, in that connection, damaging is defined closely as something which endangers. Clause 6 relates to international relations and clause 6(4) uses the word "damaging." In all those instances we are replacing the word jeopardises with something which seems more precise and more limiting, namely, damaging.

In relation to clause 6, how on earth is it possible to decide whether a disclosure is damaging to international relations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would not be in order for the Minister to respond to that question. We are debating the amendments to clauses 2 and 3.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, but a study of the Bill shows that one is referred back to those clauses for a definition of the word damaging as it appears in clause 6(4). That clause says:

"damaging shall be determined as it would be in relation to a disclosure of the information, document or article in question by a Crown servant in contravention of section 1(3), 2(1) and 3(1)".

In other words, the clauses are covered by the amendments. In those circumstances it is fair to say that if we accept the amendment it has a specific consequence on clause 6(4). I am not trying to bring in new material. I am simply trying to show that the amendment affects clause 6(4), which refers back to the definition of damaging given earlier in the Bill.

If we accept the amendment, and thereby have a consequential change in relation to the word "damaging" in clause 6(4), how will that affect any consideration of damage in Britain's relations with an international body, and particularly in our relations with the EEC, bearing in mind that Mr. Jacques Delors, the president of the Commission, has said that before long about four fifths of all legislation affecting the House of Commons will go through the Council of Ministers procedure?

I am not asking a silly question. It is vital that those who are engaged in EEC work should have an idea of the tests that will apply if there is any disclosure. How will it endanger the country's interests as opposed to jeopardising those interests? Do the Government regard this as a significant change? May we be told of the categories of information to which this will apply?

Will the amendment have a bearing on clause 4? Although it appears to affect all the other clauses in the measure, it seems not to concern clause 4. If so, does the Minister consider that to be reasonable? Clause 4 deals with the consequences of what will happen if anybody reveals information which

"results in the commission of an offence".

That has wide scope because it relates to any

"Crown servant or government contractor"

who

"discloses . . . information . . . to which this section applies and which . . . results in the commission of an offence".

Am I right in thinking that the amendment will apply to all the other clauses but will not sharpen up the definition in clause 4? I ask that because discussions are taking place now about the controversial issue of the revelation of information in reports of inspectors who have been looking into a company merger. We also have the possibility of an inspection by what is called the serious fraud squad. Bearing in mind the need to protect the community, it would be sad if we sharpened up the definition of disclosure in all the other clauses, but made no change in clause 4.

If the Government are arguing that only issues which endanger the national interest should have this protection, it would be wrong if it were not applied, for example, to reports about the mergers of companies or investigations by the serious fraud squad, where the need to give protection to the general public seems greater than ever.

Those of us who oppose the Bill in principle are grateful that the Government have brought forward this new definition, which will sharpen the position and heighten the test by which it will be decided whether an action endangers the national interest as opposed to jeopardises it. Will this apply to what I would call other minor and consequential disclosures and, if not, why not?

The Minister will accept that civil servants indulge in what I would describe as a "normal amount of disclosure" for a variety of reasons. Some of those might endanger the country, some of those civil servants might be bad people and some might just not be prepared to look on something confidential as confidential or something secret as secret.

Every hon. Member would accept that we must have some law to restrict their activities. On the other hand, when we have a law relating, for example, to companies, where the Government have complete and absolute power to decide whether a document should be published, and when and whether an issue should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and the person affected has no guarantee or protection, is it fair and reasonable that in that one case the Government are making no concession and no commitment? I hope that the Minister can give us some guidance as to why he is going forward with this in regard to international relations, which is a major concession, but is not prepared to make the same concession on clause 4.

Mr. Maclennan: It appears that the amendments are significant, particularly the amendment to clause 3. It will be recalled that in earlier debates we called in question the width of the nature of the documents that were protected from disclosure. By the use of the word "endangers" in preference to "jeopardises" the Government appear to be conceding that the nature of the documents themselves may be also somewhat confined by the use of the word endangers.

It is not conceivable that the interests of the United Kingdom abroad could be endangered by the revelation of, for example, certain minor communications about commercial matters which are the stuff of everyday traffic between Whitehall and Brussels, and in which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) takes such an interest. They might be important matters, involving the interests of the nation, but not matters about which it would be appropriate to use the word endangers. I hope that the Minister will confirm that that interpretation of the Government's intention is correct.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): The amendments should be welcomed, but I wish to probe the Minister briefly on a linguistic point and a political point. As to the linguistic point, I simply seek his confirmation that he believes that the word "endangers" heightens the harm test. That may seem obvious until one goes back into the linguistic roots of language and realises that in older days to be in jeopardy was considered a much higher level of serious trouble than to be in danger. I refer to the example in the King James authorised version of the Bible when Uriah the Hittite was placed in jeopardy by King David sending him into the front line, which was considerably more dangerous than merely being in danger, as various other biblical characters were in less life-threatening situations.

With the passing of the years it is probably true that "jeopardises" has fallen behind and "endangers" has gone ahead. I simply wish confirmation from the Treasury Bench that it is certain that it is using the word in the modern sense and that "endangers" heightens the threshold of proof. That is desirable. I can see a good Queen's counsel in front of a jury managing to get an unfortunate victim or two acquitted by playing on the words and saying, "Members of the jury, can you believe that my client intended to endanger or cast into danger the whole interests of the United Kingdom," whereas many a civil servant might have been able to suggest that the interests of the United Kingdom were jeopardised by a minor leak.

Perhaps more important than the linguistic point is the Minister's attitude to the House of Commons, which he appears to place on an inferior level to the other place. When he made his few words of introduction, he clearly said that the Government have experienced this dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, swapping the word "jeopardises" for "endangers" because of what was said in the other place.

11.45 pm

It is in the memory of many hon. Members in this debating Chamber tonight that exactly the same points were made on the Floor of the House by many hon. Members. I recall making some of them myself. At that time we met a wall of silence. There was not a single sign of any concession. The Minister might at least have the grace to say tonight that the Government took into account what was said in the House of Commons, not just what was said in the other place. His words from the Dispatch Box this evening certainly gave the impression that only the arguments in the other place weighed with him.

Finally, I want to penetrate the mystery of the Government's thinking on this matter. Why have they decided to make this concession? On the whole, they have not been convinced by any argument from any source throughout the Bill's proceedings, yet they have suddenly introduced amendment No. 3. Was it a matter of letting one of the good amendments come up on a roulette wheel? Spin the wheel and see which number is lucky. Why this amendment? Why were the Government convinced about something which they rejected out of hand when it was discussed in this House?

In the old days when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was a member of the Cabinet one referred to the statutory woman. Now we have the statutory amendment. We have at last got the Government to accept one of the multitude of well-argued and convincing amendments. Why this one? I should like to know.

Mr. John Patten *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I take it that the Minister has to the leave of the House to speak again.

Mr. Patten: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) made an important point about the substance and the meaning of the word "endangers" and its relationship to the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) made a linguistic point and then laid down a political challenge. I shall deal with those points before dealing separately with the important points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

As I explained in my brief introduction, the amendments respond to a suggestion that the jury would find it easier to cope with the concept of endangering than with that of jeopardising. I do not regard the amendment as making a substantial change in the effect of the test of harm, other than to make it more readily applicable and understandable by the jury. On balance, the average woman or man in the jury room might find herself or himself easier and happier with the word "endanger" than with the word "jeopardise".

Mr. Aitken: In seeing the amendment as something which does not change the Bill but simply helps the jury, is my hon. Friend hoping for more acquittals or more convictions?

Mr. Patten: The Bill, as my hon. Friend knows, is based on leaving matters to the jury. Ministers must keep their hopes, pious or not, to themselves, and I intend to do so tonight.

My hon. Friend made what was almost a constitutional point, referring to our earlier debate on the guillotine motion. I intended no discourtesy to this place when I referred to the other place. We are dealing with amendments sent to this House from the other place. Therefore, I have to refer to the other place, even though the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) wishes it ill and a short life.

Mr. Maclennan: Is the Minister really saying that there is no difference in modern parlance between the use of the word "jeopardise" and the use of "endanger"?

Mr. Patten: I am simply saying what I said a moment or two ago, which will be recorded in *Hansard*. The jury will find it easier to cope with the concept of endangering than with that of jeopardising. All through the debate we have been talking about the use of words and trying to get the words right in an attempt to improve the Bill.

Tests of harm have been discussed at considerable length in the House and in the other place. Both Houses have agreed that the tests are based on the right principle and are set at the right level. Those issues have been settled and we should not seek to reopen them in this debate.

I turn to the important questions asked directly of me by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not become too involved in company investigations and matters European. I certainly will not mention M. Jacques Delors, other than to do so now.

Clause 6(4) contains a damage test that attracts the language of the test in clause 2, in relation to defence, and in clause 3 in relation to international relations. Thereafter, it would be for the jury to decide, as always under the provisions of the Bill, whether the harm test had been met.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East also asked about clause 4, and whether the change involving "endanger" affected clause 4. The answer to that question is no, because clause 4 does not attract the harm test to which the amendments refer.

Understandably, because of his interests, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East has made some comments which have gone wider than the terms of the amendments. The points that he raised about clause 4 are completely separate. The Government believe that the provisions in clause 4 are right and do not need amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 4 agreed to.

Clause 8

SAFEGUARDING OF INFORMATION

Lords amendment: No. 5, in page 7, line 47 after "servant" insert "or government contractor"

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

This is a drafting amendment which simply makes it clear that the obligations under clause 8(1), in respect of the handling of documents in his possession are exactly the same for a Government contractor, who has been notified under clause 1(6), as they are for any other Govenment contractor.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: May I ask the Minister a brief question? He has been very helpful and courteous in his answers. How do police fit in if they are used by Government Departments? We know what a Crown servant is, but would someone who was employed by the Metropolitan police or the local authority police and used for this purpose, be a Government contractor or a Crown servant? Is the serious drugs squad, which is apparently directly employed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for particular purposes, a Government contractor? The Minister will appreciate that this is an important and serious matter, particularly as the serious fraud squad has the special ability, due to the length of its deliberations, to stop matters coming before the general public. What is its position when it is directly employed by, for example, someone directly employed by a Government Department? Will it be affected?

Mr. Patten: When my hon. Friend used the term "local authority police" early in his remarks, did he mean police employed by local police authorities, rather than by local authorities?

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Yes.

Mr. Patten: The people to whom my hon. Friend referred would be regarded as Crown servants.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 8, line 18, after "any" insert "official"

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 9.

Mr. Patten: The amendments relate to the offence in clause 8(6) of giving unauthorised access to protected information. The amendments are aimed directly to meet the points made in another place; they are intended to apply the offence only to someone who knows that he was disclosing official information, and to clarify the presentation of the offence. I was glad that the Opposition spokesman in another place said that the amendments were acceptable to the Opposition and had his consent and approval.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 7 to 9 agreed to.

Schedule 1

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 12, line 11, at end insert—

"( ) Section 30(2)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975;"

Mr. John Patten: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment corrects an omission in schedule 1 and inserts in the schedule a reference to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975.

Mr. Dalyell: Why was it omitted? Was the Scottish Office not consulted?

Mr. Patten: It was a mistake for which I take full responsibility.

Question put and agreed to.

Drug Misuse

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

11.55 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister, who has had a very busy time replying to the previous debate and who must now reply to an Adjournment debate starting just before midnight. I should like to say, however, how important I consider this subject. It is a worldwide problem. I think that we are all aware—certainly I am aware—of the Government's efforts in this regard; I am also well aware that there is no single answer to the problem of drugs.

First, there is the problem of drugs coming into this country. All the heroin and cocaine and most of the cannabis comes from abroad: 80 per cent. of the heroin comes from south-west Asia, the cocaine from South America, the herbal cannabis from West Africa and Jamaica and the cannabis resin from the Lebanon and Morocco. The drugs must first be smuggled into the United Kingdom; the drug traffickers then ensure that they get on to the streets.

Obviously, the more readily available the drugs, the more likely people are to experiment with them. That is why it is important to try to stop them coming in, and I believe the increase in international co-operation to be of immense value. Through the United Nations, a conference was held in Vienna in June 1987 which produced more international co-operation to combat all aspects of the problem. Its aims were, first, to stop illicit drug production, and secondly to co-operate to prevent international trafficking.

Three main ways were suggested to prevent the raw material of drugs from being produced. The first was law enforcement—in other words, preventing people from growing illicit crops. The second was crop eradication—in other words wiping out crops that have been grown unlawfully. The third was crop substitution—in other words encouraging the growth of new crops in place of illicit crops. All those methods, however, have proved very difficult. Law enforcement is very expensive in terms of manpower; crop eradication cannot stop farmers replanting at the earliest opportunity; and crop substitution is likely to require a new infrastructure—in other words, it would prove extremely costly.

Perhaps it is best to consider enforcement. This country now has a national drugs intelligence unit, which I believe provides an essential link between the police and Customs and Excise. I pay tribute to the work done by drug squads. We must remember that the illegal drugs business is now the most profitable international business in the world: addiction and smuggling continue to spread, not just in the rich countries but from Peru to India. In several countries, narco tyndicates, as they are called, are more powerful than the Governments of those countries. With these enormous drug empires comes a chain of violence and terror.

I do not have to remind my hon. Friend the Minister of what happens in Colombia, which is dominated by the Medellin drug cartel, which may be admired by the poor for its flamboyance but which is feared by all in public life because at least 20 journalists and 50 judges have died for daring to challenge it. I am told by people in the drug squads in this country and the United States of America that the Mafia at its worst pales into insignificance beside the Colombian drug syndicates.

Now this country has what is called the advent of the yardies. I will quote the following article from the *Daily Telegraph* of 13 October 1988:

"When Innocent Egbulefu, a Nigerian drug dealer, was thrown from the eighth floor of an east London tower block in March 1986, the investigation into his death received little publicity. During it, however, disturbing rumours emerged of a new and vicious Jamaican gang attempting to gain a foothold in the expanding London cocaine market.

Egbulefu is now recognised as the first of at least six murder victims in Britain of the Yardies, whose American counterparts are seen by the FBI as the most dangerous organised crime group after the Mafia.

His death prompted the Metropolitan Police to form a covert squad to cover intelligence on the Yardies. That the 16-strong squad is now to be almost doubled in strength, at a time of fierce competition for 'limited resources', is a measure of Scotland Yard's alarm at the threat posed by Jamaican organised crime.

The Yardies is a loose association of violent criminals, most of whom originated in Kingston, Jamaica and whose principal interest is the trafficking and sale of cocaine. In Britain, they are perceived as a new phenomenon. In America, however, their counterparts, the 'posses', are said to have been responsible for up to 800 drug-related murders since 1984. The aim of the Yardie squad is to make sure the American experience is not repeated in Britain."

Every person on that Yardie squad must be aware of the dangers involved. As I have said, the illegal drug business is highly profitable. This fact was brought home forcibly to me in 1985 when I went with the Home Affairs Select Committee to visit the United States. In New York, we were taken to the drug dealing area on the lower east side, where we saw the rooftop spotters who were there to ensure that, if the police or law enforcement officers came close, a warning would be given to the people selling drugs.

We saw the disused buildings where the drug dealing was done and the holes in the wall where people passed through their money and got their fix. Much of what we saw was in Washington. Then we went to Miami, which has been referred to as the drug capital of the United States. I do not need to give my hon. Friend lessons in geography, as I understand that that was his subject before he entered Parliament, but I must tell him that Miami is the largest city in Florida, a peninsula with thousands of miles of coastline. As it is impossible to monitor all that coastline, Florida could be called a smugglers' paradise, especially since it is so close to south America and the cocaine centres.

While in Miami, we were taken to a disused factory on an industrial estate, where an enormous amount of cociane had been seized by the authorities. Armed guards were on duty because the value of the cocaine held there was inestimable. We were sworn to secrecy—although it made no difference, since none of us knew his way around Miami —because of the danger to those employed at that centre. If the people who were keen to sell that cocaine had realised where it was being held, I doubt very much that armed guards could have kept them away.

I am told that a few years previously one of the strangest sights in Miami was a queue of men carrying suitcases outside a bank before opening time. Each person carrying a suitcase was accompanied by an armed minder. They were waiting to pay into the bank huge numbers of small denomination bills that had been acquired by drug pushing. Now there are no queues, because the United States has changed the law. The Banks Secrecy Act

requires all cash deposits of over $10,000 to be reported by the bank to the federal authorities. The drug barons in the United States have been forced to launder their profits in tax havens abroad.

What struck me most about that visit to Miami was the way in which the assets of convicted drug barons were used to continue the fight against drugs. It was rather like going to an auctioneer's paradise. We were shown pictures of beautiful homes, racehorses, jewellery, paintings and cars, all of which were the assets of people who had been convicted of drug offences. Their assets were auctioned and sold. The proceeds were then used in the battle against drugs. I happen to believe that that is a good idea. I hope that my hon. Friend will explain why we have not followed the United States example.

A few weeks ago, at Question Time, I asked my hon. Friend what happened to the money that is confiscated as a result of the ill deeds of drug barons. He said that it was taken by the Treasury. Money confiscated from criminals should be put to work in the best possible way for the community. The United States Drug Enforcement Agency has been virtually self-supporting for some years because of the dirty money that it has seized and put to good use. If it is possible to do that in the United States, why cannot it be done here?

I draw to my hon. Friend's attention two recent cases. The first is the case of Charlotte Chrastny. She got seven years for her part in cocaine smuggling. She was ordered to pay £2,600,000 from the profits of her drug operations. The second case is that of Ronnie French. He got eight and a half years, with an extra 10 years without remission unless he hands over £1,700,000, which is regarded as his share of drug profits. Within the last two months, those two cases have resulted in the realisation of £4,300,000. That sum could profitably be used in the fight against drugs instead of going into the Treasury's coffers.

Finally, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to a new development. Last year, the United States Drug Enforcement Agency urged the Metropolitan police to apply for £32·5 million of drug assets that had been seized with the help of the Metropolitan police's special task force that had been investigating the Brinks-Mat bullion robbery. However, the United States authorities ruled against us. They said that there was no mutual assistance agreement with Britain. I think that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary took prompt action in that case, and agreement has now been reached. The change in the law that was needed has now taken place.

The $64,000 question that I want to ask my hon. Friend is this: does the Treasury get the £32·5 million, or do the police get it? I understand that the United States Drug Enforcement Agency believes that the police should have the money. I support that view.

We all want progress to be made in the fight against drugs. To use the ill-gotten gains of drug barons in the fight against drugs surely makes sense. I hope that my hon. Friend will confirm that when he replies to the debate.

12.8 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Member have the leave of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and the Minister to speak in the debate?

Sir Fergus Montgomery *indicated assent.*

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rathbone: I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and also my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and the Minister for allowing me to speak for just a few moments.

I rise as the chairman of the all-party drug misuse group to support every word said by my hon. Friend. He drew attention to the marvellous job which the national drugs intelligence unit has been doing, both in encouraging co-operation between police forces, and—all-important—encouraging co-operation between police forces and the Customs. Anything we can do to finance their operation better, to improve the gathering of intelligence, which is imperative in tracking down drug traffickers, ought to be done.

My hon. Friend drew attention to the horrifying activities of the Mafia and the Yardies, and the way this took place in crack houses, which have yet to come to this country—thank goodness, although all the signs are that they are on the way. I know that the Home Affairs Select Committee has studied this question and will return to it again. I should like to endorse what my hon. Friend said about their studies and also what he said about the Government's expenditure, their activities and their attention to this problem, most particularly in terms of the confiscation of drug assets.

I add my own voice and the voice of the all-party drug misuse group to my hon. Friend's plea to the Government to reconsider yet again the application of these funds taken from drug misusers and traffickers in order to use them to the benefit of the hunt for those international criminals and to prevent the tragic social harm they do to everybody in this country and around the world.

12.11 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am extremely pleased to be able to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), and also to one or two important points in the short and pointed intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), whom I am very pleased to see in the Chamber tonight.

Of course I recognise the concern which has led my hon. Friend to raise this problem. It is a very serious problem indeed, and I welcome the opportunity to put on record what the Government are doing to tackle it both nationally and internationally, where I believe we have a strong case to claim that we are playing a leading role, certainly within Europe and possibly in other parts of the globe as well.

Drug misuse is a very complex problem, and I suspect that some, like my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes, may know more about some of the complexities than I do, but I think my hon. Friend will agree that there is no single answer to the problem, just as there is no single drug which is misused and abused in this country.

In seeking to combat the problem, a strategy has to be devised which tackles every aspect of it. Our strategy was first formulated in 1984 and is set out in the Home Office document "Tackling Drug Misuse", the third edition of which was published last June. The strategy is comprehensive, and I hope that it is balanced as well. It

[The Minister of State, Home Office]

seems so to me, and it is as much concerned with reducing demand as it is with trying to stop illicit supplies being imported. Both are very important aspects.

We are taking action simultaneously on five main fronts: first, to reduce supplies from abroad; secondly, to increase the effectiveness of enforcement, to which my hon. Friend referred; thirdly, to maintain effective deterrence and tight domestic controls; fourthly, to develop prevention and education, which is critical; and fifthly, to improve treatment and rehabilitation. No one who has visited treatment and rehabilitation units, as I am sure all hon. Members in the Chamber tonight have done, could fail to be full of admiration for those who work there to try to help those seeking treatment and rehabilitation, or to be moved by the terrible condition to which some have been reduced by their misuse of drugs.

Our strategy is co-ordinated by an interdepartmental ministerial group on the misuse of drugs under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. That too was established in 1984 and brings together Ministers and officials from all the Departments with an interest in the problem. Brief mention of the machinery of government may not seem very important, but when Ministers at the Home Office, the territorial Ministries, the Department of Health and others have an interest, those interests need to be brought together and interrelated.

I should like to give a brief account of progress in the 10 minutes or so that remain. My hon. Friend questioned me about the Government's attitude to passing on the proceeds of confiscation to the police forces responsible for that confiscation. A high proportion of the drugs that are misused in this country are illegally imported. The Government give the subject of drugs a prominent place in our exchanges with other countries and we are active in the relevant international forums, which include the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs, of which the United Kingdom has been a member since 1946, the Council of Europe's drug co-operation group—more ordinarily known as the Pompidou group—the European Community, the Customs Co-operation Council and Interpol.

We played a leading role, which was internationally recognised, in drawing up the new United Nations convention against illicit drug trafficking, which was adopted in Vienna last December. It is the first international instrument concerned exclusively with the illicit traffic in drugs. It provides a comprehensive framework for international co-operation in tackling the problem. At the last count, 59 countries, including Britain, had signed the convention subject to ratification. That is not bad since last December.

The Government also contribute substantially to the United Nations for drug abuse control, as I am sure the House would wish. Between 1982 and 1988, we pledged or contributed a total of $16·7 million to the fund, making us the fourth largest donor. Our contributions to the fund's specific projects have included £3·4 million for opium eradication and substitution in Pakistan. Crop substitution is extremely important and costly, as it involves not only money but social change, because in some countries people have cultivated poppies and other substances for generations In addition, we have contributed £2·2 million to drug-related development projects in Bolivia.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary secured agreement in 1987 to the quadrupling to some £2 million a year of his budget for enforcement and eradicating illicit drug crops in key producing countries. Approximately two thirds of the overall sum is spent through the fund. We are contributing some £1 million over three years to a major law enforcement project by the fund in India, and in the past three years a total of £1·8 million has been provided to Latin American countries, to which my hon. Friend referred, particularly to Colombia, specifically in law-enforcement-related assistance against cocaine traffic. The remaining one third of the budget is spent on bilateral projects directly with other countries. The Caribbean, which alas is one of the principle transit routes for cocaine coming to Britain—I share the fears of my hon. Friend for the future—has been a particular focus for bilateral assistance.

We have a network of customs and police drug liaison officers at strategic posts abroad who work with their counterparts overseas and provide valuable intelligence. Some 15 are now in place doing that difficult and potentially dangerous work. We intend to add more in the not-too-distant future. The intelligence which flows from the work of those customs and police drug liaison officers is enormously valuable in leading to the seizures of drugs in recent years.

On the European front, we regard the Council of Europe group to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking —the Pompidou group—as the primary forum for developing further co-operation. We have chaired the group since 1984. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has convened an extraordinary ministerial meeting of the group in London on 18 and 19 May 1989 to give renewed political impetus to the fight against drugs in Europe. That again shows that my right hon. Friend and the United Kingdom Government are taking the lead in Europe on this important issue.

The agenda for the meeting will focus on three items, which seem to us to be the most urgent at the European level. First, there is the threat posed by cocaine which, all the evidence suggests, is now being targeted increasingly on Europe following the saturation of the North American market to which my hon. Friend referred when he was talking about his visit to Miami. Secondly, there is the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets, which again concerned my hon. Friend; thirdly, there are the important problems posed by AIDS and drug misuse.

I want to speak briefly about resources and to give some answers to my hon. Friend's questions about whether confiscated resources should go to the police forces that have carried out the confiscations. Many resources have been put into fighting the drug problem in this country. We have trebled the number of customs and specialist investigators since 1979. Over £13 million is being made available over four years to develop and introduce technical aids, such as X-ray machines for scanning cargo, and another £7 million has been spent on cutter replacement to improve surveillance of coastal waters.

The strength of the police force drug squads in England is more than 40 per cent. greater than it was at the end of 1983, standing as it does now at about 850 men. That greater commitment of resources is being reflected in real success in enforcement. In 1988, customs seized illicit

drugs with a street value of £185 million. The number of custodial sentences of more than seven years imposed for drug offences rose from 16 in 1980 to 102 in 1987, so we can see that enforcement is beginning to work.

I am aware of the demands that have been made—to which my hon. Friend referred—for drug investigations, especially those with an international dimension, to be recognised in terms of the additional weight they place on police resources. Initially, the concept of funding drugs work through seized assets is appealing. It is the measure of success of an individual force, and that force could say, "We have seized the money and we are now going to spend it on drugs enforcement." However, funding drugs work through seized assets is not very flexible and it might not be fair. Sometimes, seizures of drugs happen almost by chance. Sometimes, a number of consignments come in persistently through the same avenues.

If we relied on funding drugs work through seized assets, we could not rely on a steady income and we could not plan ahead. It makes sense to determine law enforcement resources according to needs and spending priorities, rather than what happens to have been confiscated in any particular place. The debate began a couple of weeks ago during Home Office questions, when I was able only to give a short answer. My answer has been slightly afforced to my hon. Friend tonight, but I suspect that he may want to return to this point and to argue it in greater detail.

My hon. Friend also referred to the desire of the American drug enforcement authorities to pay the Metropolitan police £32·5 million in reward money. My hon. Friend is right: in the last stages of trying to achieve that, the American Government realised that they did not have the powers within their laws to make such an award. My hon. Friend is also right to say that so much that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who is ministerially responsible for these matters, are doing is concerned with trying to improve multilateral and bilateral arrangements concerning enforcement and confiscation. We shall pursue that vigorously.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 May 1989

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

Motion made and Question proposed,

That the Speaker do issue his warrant for the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the borough constituency of Glasgow, Central in the room of Mr. Robert McTaggart, deceased.—*[Mr. Sillars.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. The motion will stand over until the commencement of Public Business; that is, immediately after the ten-minute Bill.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL

WESLEYAN ASSURANCE SOCIETY BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Beef Production

1. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the farming industry regarding the future of beef production in Scotland.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. and learned Friend received a number of representations recently about that matter from the National Farmers Union of Scotland and other interested bodies.

Mr. Wallace: Although last week's price agreement brought some welcome relief to the beef industry, interest rate increases over recent months more than cancels it out. The Minister may be aware that beef producers in my own constituency are concerned that the new beef premium should be paid on farm; that in specialist beef herds it should be extended to include heifers; and that the suckler cow premium should be increased—which is something that the United Kingdom Government can do off their own back, because it does not have to be negotiated. What progress has been made with each of those three measures?

Mr. Lang: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remark that the scheme has been well received by beef farmers. The green pound devaluation and the phasing out of monetary compensatory amounts will certainly be beneficial. As to the headage payment, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that the 90 limit is an improvement on the proposed limit of 75 and on the limit of 50 that previously applied in other countries. I understand the problems of farmers in Orkney. My right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have undertaken to review the practicability and cost-effectiveness of moving to an on-farm basis for slaughter. Meanwhile, prices are holding up well, including those for heifers.

Sir Hector Monro: In view of the overall fall in hill farmers' income in recent years, will my hon. Friend particularly bear in mind the headage payment on beef? It would be much better if the 90 limit, which we welcome, were paid for cows on farm rather than at slaughter. Will my hon. Friend do everything possible through the proper channels to ensure that the suckler cow premium is raised to the maximum limit?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend will have heard my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). I particularly note his comment about the suckler cow premium. I, like him, think that it is a good deal for farmers, adding about £15 million to £20 million to farm incomes in Scotland at low cost to the taxpayer and at negligible expense, in terms of prices, to the consumer.

Midlothian Constituency

2. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last visited the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend visits the hon. Member's constituency from time to time, both officially and privately.

Mr. Eadie: Is it not strange that when the Secretary of State for Scotland has a question put to him, he is not prepared to answer it at the Dispatch Box? I put it to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that since he decided it was politic to visit Longannet, and since Bilston Glen and Monktonhall collieries are in very close proximity to his constituency, would it not have been equally politic to have visited them? As the men at Bilston Glen and Monktonhall decided by a majority to resist the closure of those collieries, will the Secretary of State consider visiting them, especially since, on the basis of the article that was published in the Edinburgh *Evening News* on Monday, the right hon. and learned Gentleman regards himself as the representative and defender of Scottish interests in the Cabinet. It is disgraceful that the Secretary of State did not answer my question.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend will have heard the hon. Gentleman's comments. As is the normal practice, he shares his responsibilities fairly, evenly and sensibly with his ministerial colleagues.

The proposed closure of Bilston Glen is a matter of regret for us all. However it is a matter for the commercial judgment of British Coal. The review procedure is now under way and that is the appropriate place in which various aspects of the proposed closure can be fully considered.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is not that long since Ministers were bending the law to get miners through the gates of Bilston Glen colliery. Now they are standing back and allowing those gates to be closed for ever, if British Coal has its way. Is it not sheer, wanton vandalism to allow the Lothian coalfield to be closed down, with more than 100 million tonnes of low sulphur, high quality coal in its reserves, when any sensible appraisal of the world energy scene must confirm that those reserves will be required?

Mr. Lang: It is, of course, a source of regret when such a mine is closed. However the hon. Gentleman must be aware that the financial losses at Bilston Glen last year were £20 million and have been £50 million in past years. Production is averaging less than two thirds of target, and in those circumstances British Coal has had to take a commercial decision. It is now subject to the review procedure, and I am glad that, in the event of closure, miners at the pit will be offered enhanced redundancy terms.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that another important matter for the coal industry in Lothian is the agreement on coal-burn between British Coal and the South of Scotland Electricity Board? He will remember that such an agreement must include agreement on all the essentials of the contract. Does he accept that there is nothing more essential than price, which still appears to be a stumbling block? Does the Minister recall that the Secretary of State said that he was as confident as he possibly could be that an agreement would be reached? Is the Scottish Office still confident that the five-year agreement will be delivered? Given its importance to the Scottish economy, and the 3,000 jobs at stake, will he ensure that the agreement is concluded and that it sticks?

Mr. Lang: The bulk of Bilston Glen's output goes to industrial and domestic users, but we hope that agreement will be reached on coal-burn between British Coal and the SSEB. However, it must be a matter for commercial negotiation between those parties.

Mr. Eadie: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I propose to raise it on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity. It is disgraceful that the Secretary of State is here but not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Skye Bridge

3. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the construction of a bridge to the Isle of Skye.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The two firms which suggested that a bridge might be built as a private sector project have provided the information requested. The Scottish Development Department is now considering it and will be consulting the Highland regional council.

Mr. Kennedy: Can the Minister give some further indication of Scottish Office thinking on the vexed question of tolls being used to finance any possible private sector project, given the great concern on the island about the level of tolls, and the principle that if such a fixed link is established, as I hope it will, it should be part of the ongoing trunk route which will require the upgrading to trunk road status of the Kyleakin to Uig road? What is the present status of the application from Caledonian MacBrayne in regard to the replacement of the existing ferries used in the Kyle of Lochalsh to Kyleakin route, which is clearly of great relevance to the consideration of the bridge?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: CalMac is carrying out an investment appraisal on replacing the existing ferries and is considering a number of options, including refurbishing the existing vessels or replacing them with newer, larger ones. Obviously the possibility of a bridge has to be taken into account. The decision will involve the Highland regional council and the Secretary of State and I hope that it will be forthcoming in the relatively near future. No decision has been made as yet on a bridge or tolls, but a tolled private crossing in place of a ferry might provide a permanent crossing sooner than would otherwise be possible. Although no decision on tolls has been made, and I cannot speculate, I presume that travellers will prefer to pay to cross without delay at any time of the day or night than to continue with the ferries.

Mr. Wilson: I wish to question the Minister on precisely that latter assumption. Does he agree that the Eilean a'Cheo—the misty isle—should not be used as a front to slip in the precedent of privatising the public highway system in Scotland? Will he give an assurance that local communities' views will be binding and that a high-toll bridge will not be imposed? Will he give an assurance that improvements in the public highway and bridge system will continue to be funded from general taxation and that there will be no more nonsense of private enterprise roads and bridges?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amount of toll will depend on proposals made by the private sector. Public spending on trunk roads has risen to £162 million this year. There are precedents for private expenditure in other parts of Britain, such as the Dartford bridge across the River Thames, which is a private sector project.

European Regional Development Fund

4. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Scotland has received awards of just over £800 million since the regional fund's inception.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that the Scottish people are aware of the size of assistance that the Scottish economy receives? If not, what is he doing further to publicise it?

Mr. Rifkind: Over the years, the Scottish Office, local authorities and others, have succeeded in winning for Scotland a substantial share of the regional fund. The money is used for a series of crucial projects affecting Scottish infrastructure. I believe that the benefits of the support are well understood.

Mr. Steel: How much more would have been spent in Scotland if European regional fund grants had been additional to and not in place of Scottish Office money?

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman should appreciate that whatever funding is given to the United Kingdom, the contribution that the United Kingdom taxpayer makes to the Commission must be taken into account. These are not new resources invented from air; they are taxpayers' funds, whatever the source may be.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Secretary of State aware that Bruce Millan disagrees fundamentally and basically? What response has the Scottish Office given to Bruce Millan on additionality?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that when Mr. Bruce Millan was Secretary of State for Scotland, the rules on additionality were exactly the same as they are now. It is odd for him to change his mind because he has become a Commissioner in Brussels.

Train Services

5. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed with representatives of British Rail the case for improvement of train services *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of the British Rail (Scottish) board, Mr. John Cameron, on 26 April 1989 and discussed various matters concerned with rail services in Scotland and between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wray: Will the Minister assure the House that he will not allow British Rail's plans for Scotland to go ahead unless it applies stricter safety measures? Does the Minister realise that since 1973 there has been a 126 per cent. increase in fires? Is this because of unmanned railway stations?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of the chairman of British Rail. Safety is an extremely high priority, as it should be. We shall take seriously into account the results of the inquiry into the accident at Belgrove.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Has the electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen been discussed with senior representatives of British Rail? If not, will my hon. Friend impress on the chairman of British Rail the importance of electrification, especially given the huge sums of money being spent south of London on the Channel tunnel?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1979, £3·7 billion has been invested on railways throughout the United Kingdom, £300 million of which was spent on the electrification of the east coast route. British Rail takes the view that electrification of the route to Aberdeen is not justified because north of Edinburgh passenger volume is much less than in other parts of the country. It is proceeding with the £300 million east coast main line project and substantial parts of the network in the west of Scotland have been electrified.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will know that to achieve better safety on the railways skilled engineers must be employed to carry out the work. Will he speak to British Rail about the lack of apprentices being taken on? It is shameful, when we have such high unemployment, that we are not planning for the future. Will he ensure that more apprentices are trained in the skills that the industry needs?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly mention those points to the chairman of British Rail. I stress that Scotland will be a major beneficiary of electrification of the east coast main line. In addition, the Scottish Office has agreed to provide a 75 per cent. grant to Strathclyde regional council towards the £40 million of new rolling stock. I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's point about apprentices.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear carefully and closely in mind what my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said about the Edinburgh to Aberdeen section? It must be electrified if the north-east of Scotland is to compete effectively and efficiently with the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe after 1992. Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the rail lines to Prestwick must be upgraded and a station and high-speed link provided so that people in the east of Scotland as well as Glasgow can get to Prestwick quickly?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. British Rail will co-operate in the provision of information to groups interested in the electrification of the railway line to the north, although it has formed another view, which I have mentioned. Obviously, we should have excellent communications with the Channel tunnel. There are plans to ensure that there are excellent arrangements for bypassing London through the west to ensure that trains get through speedily.

On Prestwick, investment in railways and associated developments is a matter for British Rail, but we shall welcome any proposals to improve infrastructure communications in Scotland.

Community Charge

6. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had about the collection of unpaid poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None. It is clear from their own budget proposals that regional and islands councils do not expect non-payment to be a significant problem.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister realise that people are on income support because they do not have enough money to survive without it? Will he discuss with his colleagues in the DSS the standard of living that is likely to be endured by people on income support whose benefit is deducted, leaving only 10p of income support? Clearly, such a standard of living is extremely poor. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that his policies are harsh and oppressive and will he repeal the statutory instrument that creates this problem?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Lady knows, people on income support will be eligible for a maximum rebate. In addition, income support has been increased to help meet the remaining 20 per cent. of the charge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the campaign of mass resistance, which was constantly predicted by the Opposition, has failed to materialise? Is it not the height of irresponsibility for certain Labour councillors in Edinburgh to announce the highest community charge rate in Scotland and subsequently declare that they will not pay it?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. Campaigns of non-payment are futile and irresponsible. It is shameful that people in elected offices should encourage others to break the law.

Mr. Sillars: How does the Minister justify a case which has been publicised of a schizophrenic woman with a mental age of seven who is just recovering from a cervical cancer operation and who has no capacity to earn? How does he justify applying a poll tax to her, and how will he get the money out of her?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me about that case and if the person is his constituent, I shall look into it. The Scottish National party's campaign to generate a phantom army of 100,000 non-payers is futile and irresponsible. It may interest the hon. Gentleman to know that, even if the SNP succeeded in finding 100,000 such non-payers, local authority revenue would be reduced by less than 0·5 per cent.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Assuming that the lady who has been described by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) previously lived alone, how would she have paid her rates?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend has made a fair point. I have offered to look into the case if it concerns a constituent of the hon. Member for Govan. Perhaps I may leave the matter there.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that many people will not pay the poll tax because they cannot understand the rebate system? What steps has he taken to prolong the period during which they may apply for rebates? On the question of non-payment on principle, is not there an honourable tradition in democratic countries of resisting unjust and unfair taxes and withholding what is felt necessary?

Mr. Lang: Many people who thought domestic rates grossly unfair continued to pay them. We have now replaced them with an infinitely fairer tax that spreads the burden more evenly.

We wish everyone eligible for a rebate to apply for it and we are advertising extensively to achieve that. We have also enabled people to backdate their application by extending the period for such applications, exceptionally, to 56 days.

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that a young constituent of mine who is attending a Scottish university has been informed that he is not eligible for a community charge rebate because his parental home is not in Scotland? Will all British students be entitled to rebate regardless of where they happen to live in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Lang: Students are not eligible for rebate; they are entitled to an exemption from 80 per cent. of the community charge. If my hon. Friend writes to me about his constituent, I shall certainly be happy to clarify the precise position.

Mr. Buchan: Is it not clear already that the rebate system is in such a mess and so complicated and difficult that the 56-day period is quite insufficient and should be extended? Will the Minister confirm that the most chicken-hearted leaders of all are the leaders of a political party who will not suffer themselves if they do not pay the poll tax but who are calling upon others who cannot afford to do so not to pay it?

Mr. Lang: I think that the talk of "chicken-hearted leadership" was used by the Scottish National party about the Labour party. It is not my purpose to intrude in a family squabble between Socialists.

We are certainly keen to encourage people to apply for rebates. More than 750,000 applications have been accepted by local authorities for processing. They are coming in in their thousands every day and are being processed very quickly.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who recommend selective obedience to the law are producing a recipe for anarchy? Does he also agree that it is scandalous that hon. Members should threaten not to pay a tax duly authorised by the House? Does he further agree that if the policy of non-payment succeeded, it would serve only to reduce local authorities' cash flow and restrict the services that they can provide, thus hitting those on the lowest incomes rather than somewhat self-satisfied Labour Back Benchers?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and makes his point extremely well. Fortunately most local authorities have not only assumed that at least 95 per cent. of those liable to pay will pay but the anecdotal evidence suggests that payments are flowing in well, although it is a matter for them.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that, with income support set at bare subsistence level, there is genuine cause for concern about the indefensible principle of deduction of benefit without the consent of the individual involved? Will the Minister explain why that system has been introduced? Does he also accept that there is genuine concern—I suspect on both sides of the House—about the impact of a raft of changes affecting those on low incomes, on fixed incomes and on benefit? That includes the housing benefit changes and rent increases as well as the poll tax. Will the Minister commission an independent survey to assess the impact on those people? I ask that in the hope that the evidence which I think it will produce will persuade even him to think again.

Mr. Lang: The deduction from benefits is a well-established precedent which has been used by previous Governments. Income support has been increased by up to £2·30 a week for a couple, which, in many parts of Scotland, is more than enough to meet the 20 per cent. level of community charge. It would be more than enough in even more parts of Scotland if some local authorities had not levied such a high rate of community charge.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Is the Minister aware of the anger and concern being voiced by many people in rural parts of Scotland, particularly in Easdale in my constituency, at the fact that they must pay a flat-rate poll tax for unequal services? People in Glasgow pay the same amount, but the people of Easdale have no pavements, lighting, roads or libraries.

Mr. Lang: By implication, the hon. Lady is suggesting that people should pay only for what they get. The vast majority of local authority costs fall on the education budget, yet a great many people have no children. The important point is that local authority costs should be spread around the adult population of a region and district. Apart from anything else, it will encourage them to take a closer interest in the work of their local authorities and demand better, more relevant and efficiently delivered services.

National Dock Labour Scheme

7. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the effect the abolition of the national dock labour scheme will have on employment prospects in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I believe that the abolition of the dock labour scheme and the lifting of its restrictions will attract new investment and jobs to scheme ports and port areas in Scotland.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that the abolition of the dock labour scheme is extremely good news for Scotland? More investment will go to Scottish ports and, as a direct result, along with the ending of restrictive practices in the ports, increased job opportunities will be created. Will not the abolition of the dock labour scheme make a significant contribution to the increasing regeneration of the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A study recently commissioned by the National Association of Port Employers estimated that abolition would create up to 50,000 new jobs in scheme port areas. I should like to be confident that Scotland will share in the 50,000 new jobs.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will know that, at 3 o'clock this morning, during the deliberations of the Standing Committee on the Dock Work Bill, the Secretary of State for Employment said that he decided to abolish the Training Agency. Following the abolition of the dock labour scheme, Mr. Bill Hughes will have sole responsibility for training in our docks in Scotland. Exactly what experience has Mr. Bill Hughes had of loading and unloading ships?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Bill Hughes is an experienced man of many parts. I have considerable confidence in a great deal of what he says. One need only look at the contrasting records of Aberdeen and Peterhead to see the benefit that the abolition of the dock labour scheme will have.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in Grangemouth, where the docks are being fully automated and no dockers are required, a registered dock worker is provided with a Portakabin, a colour television and a microwave oven so that he might overcome boredom? Does my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members who think that there is nothing wrong with ghosting are only defending the indefensible and leaving Scottish industry to fall behind the rest of Europe?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is significant that business has fallen sharply at dock labour scheme ports. It is interesting also that non-scheme ports have good conditions of employment which compare favourably with those of registered dock workers.

Mr. Robert Hughes: When the Minister considers Aberdeen and Peterhead, will he compare like with like? He is not speaking of a major fishing port in Aberdeen. Will he accept that Aberdeen port has had a record year in terms of throughput, profit and investment and is looking forward to future progress, and that that progress will be damaged because of the Minister's activities?

Mr. Lang: On the contrary. Aberdeen will benefit considerably from the abolition of the dock labour scheme. The hon. Gentleman might like to know that, between 1977 and 1987, business through Aberdeen fell by 20 per cent. Over the same period, the number of fish landings at Peterhead rose by 84 per cent.

Ferry Subsidies

8. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he is making in the reduction of ferry subsidies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Shipping subsidies in total are falling. Lower oil prices and higher carryings have reduced the deficit subsidy of Caledonian MacBrayne in recent years. P and O's fare subsidy has been increasing with increasing traffic, but for the current year has been limited in real terms.

Mr. Field: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Isle of Wight has some of the highest unsubsidised ferry fares, if not in the EEC certainly in the United Kingdom. Having visited St. Kilda and read the sad history of that Scottish

island, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that the British taxpayer is subsidising the Scottish Highlands and Islands to ensure that that sad history is never repeated? Will he drive home that point to the petty Opposition parties which are intent on destroying the Act of Union?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for acknowledging that there are approximately 100,000 persons living on 75 Scottish islands, which is considerably fewer than the number of people who live in his constituency.

The ferries are very much regarded as a lifeline service. We are doing all that we can to ensure that there should be value for money. The new CalMac board will include people with commercial and shipping experience, as well as first-hand knowledge of the islands. The board will be asked to look for more efficient and cost-effective ways of delivering the same standard of service. As I have said, CalMac's subsidies have been falling, but P and O's have been marginally increasing.

GPs' Contracts

9. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had with Scottish general practitioners with regard to the new Scottish contract of service.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary wrote on 16 March to all general practitioners in Scotland inviting their views. He, I and officials have met representatives of the profession in Scotland on several occasions to discuss the new contract.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the proposed contract is very good for rural doctors? Will he also agree that doctors will maintain their income without increasing their lists, and will have adequate time to deal with patients both at home and in surgeries? Will he try to remove the misunderstanding between the general practitioners and the community, perhaps caused by publicity provided by the BMA, and try to reduce the alarm unnecessarily caused to constituents?

Mr. Rifkind: The specific proposals for rural doctors in Scotland have been warmly welcomed by the medical profession and, indeed, by many individual doctors. Of course, there are matters affecting the United Kingdom as a whole that are part of the BMA's negotiations, which are continuing. I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that these matters can best be dealt with on the basis of what is in the White Paper and not by misrepresentation of the White Paper.

Mr. Norman Hogg: How does the Secretary of State explain away the fact that everything that he and his hon. Friend do in the Health Service is greeted with complete disapproval by the Health Service professionals, and the latest episode is just another example? Does he not think that the time has come for him and his hon. Friend to pause and reconsider the Government's actions in the light of opinion being expressed within the medical profession?

Mr. Rifkind: I would be more worried by the reaction from certain quarters if it were based on a clear understanding of what is in the White Paper. So many allegations have been made in documents, such as that issued by the BMA, that have no foundation in truth. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to scare elderly people in particular by implying that in future they would not be entitled to treatment under the National Health Service. It is important indeed that those who represent the general practitioners put their arguments forward clearly and concisely. If they wish to criticise the Government, they are free to do so, but they should not criticise the Government for what is not in the White Paper. That is the weakness in their ultimate position.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The Secretary of State will be aware of the enhanced number of women general practitioners in Scotland and of the vital role they often play in preventive medicine. Would it be possible for the Scottish Office to discuss the implications of the White Paper with these women doctors, since so many of them are on part-time contracts and their careers may be damaged if the proposals went through unamended?

Mr. Rifkind: I take the hon. Lady's point; that is one of the considerations we had in mind when proposing, for example, in rural areas that payments from the rural practice fund would be based on average and not on personal list sizes, and we are prepared to consider a similar approach towards practices in urban areas as well.

Mr. Darling: Is it not the height of arrogance for the Secretary of State to accuse doctors of scaring old ladies? Is he not aware of the fact that many general practitioners in Scotland and throughout the whole country are extremely concerned at the prospect of being forced to increase their list size and of having to become accountants and to regard elderly patients, in particular, not as patients to be treated on the basis of need but simply as overheads or non-profit-making units? Does he not understand that general practitioners are concerned about the Health Service? They use it and live with it, unlike Conservative Members.

Mr. Rifkind: As one who uses the National Health Service, I repudiate entirely what the hon. Gentleman has said. He has inadvertently emphasised that he, too, has not read the White Paper.

Mr. Darling: I have.

Mr. Rifkind: If he has read it, he certainly has not understood it, because he began by proposing that general practitioners would be forced to take on more patients in order to maintain their income. No general practitioner will be forced to take on more patients to maintain his or her income and although taking on additional patients might lead to an increase in income, that is a very different proposition.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that a substantial number of doctors in my constituency are concerned about the misleading propaganda that has come out of London? Is he also aware that they have pointed out to me that under the provisions of their new contracts and because of the way in which they will be given the opportunity of choice about how to run their practices, they might be able to allocate funds from their own resources to save hospitals such as Blairgowrie cottage hospital and Forfar infirmary because the additional cash could be directed in that way?

Mr. Rifkind: That is entirely true. Of course, additional resources that do not need to be used for one purpose

within the National Health Service will continue to be available within the NHS to improve the quality of provision in both general practices and hospitals. That is why the proposals deserve to be welcomed.

Mr. Galbraith: Although the Secretary of State may have read the White Paper, he certainly does not understand it because if he did he would realise that the new GP contracts contain an incentive to increase list size. Will he accept that neither general practitioners nor patients can understand how a GP seeing more patients can somehow improve the quality of care? Will the Secretary of State reconsider his position on list sizes and on incentives to increase list sizes because then and only then can agreements be reached on GPs' contracts for the benefit of all patients?

Mr. Rifkind: There are various ways in which general practitioners can increase their income, sometimes significantly, by providing better and extra facilities to their patients. The point at issue is whether they need to increase their list size to maintain their income. That is the allegation that has been made by the BMA and repeated by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), and that allegation is totally unfounded.

Single European Market

10. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has commissioned into the likely impact of the integrated market after 1992 on the Scottish economy.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Minister of State is chairing the single market committee of the Scottish Economic Council which is examining the effects of a single European market on Scotland. In addition, a number of studies have been commissioned.

Mr. Robertson: Is the Secretary of State aware of the two reports that were published last month, one by Peat Marwick McLintock and the other by the CBI Scotland, and of yesterday's words from Professor Neil Hood of the Scottish Development Agency which confirmed that Scottish industry is singularly ill-equipped and feels that it has inadequate backup to meet the major challenges of 1992? Is it not time that the Secretary of State cast off the south-east England bias of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and conducted some more detailed studies about the impact of 1992 on Scotland's manufacturing base?

Mr. Rifkind: Many Scottish companies are ready to meet the challenge; others are not. Our objective must be to ensure that the challenge is fully realised—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members seem to be more interested in the relevance of a slogan than in the content and substance of the point being made. The committee that has been set up under the Scottish Economic Council includes representatives from industry, the trade unions and others concerned with this matter in Scotland, and they will examine the important point that the hon. Gentleman has properly raised.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the removal of the Scottish economy from the United Kingdom, which is what some anti-Unionists would have us bring about, would damage the whole of the British economy and does he further agree that if the Scottish economy tried to work on its own with such a heavy dependence on the oil industry, that would be damaging to Scotland? Does he also agree that all studies have demonstrated that trying to run those economies separately would damage the industries of both countries and would be the death of the 1992 spirit?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly the case that irrespective of political institutions the people of Scotland and the people of England are geographically destined to share the same small island. A consequence of that is bound to be a highly integrated economy and it has been shown over the years to be in the interests of the people of Scotland and of England that they share that economic destiny.

Mr. McLeish: Has not the Secretary of State been far too complacent about 1992? Is he aware of the labour force survey figures released for 1988 which show that of the 1·6 million jobs created between June 1983 and June 1988, 700,000—40 per cent.—were created in the south-east, but only 30,000—2 per cent.—were created in Scotland? Does he agree that we need an effective regional policy, investment in infrastructure and a low interest rate policy? If those policies are not adopted, Scotland will not benefit from 1992.

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the latest report from the Fraser of Allander Institute suggests that the Scottish economy is growing faster than that of the rest of the United Kingdom. If that is the view of the institute, it should be a matter of satisfaction to both sides of the House.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Secretary of State agree with the view of Jacques Delors, the president of the European Commission, that the open market of 1992 must be balanced by an effective regional policy or does he agree with the recent remarks of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said at Chatham house that a regional policy can be positively damaging to the economy?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not believe that a regional policy is damaging to the economy and that is why the present British Government exercise an extremely healthy and successful one.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a recent poll, which shows that a higher proportion of companies in Scotland and the north of England than in the rest of Britain are intending to expand in Europe is significant? Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that the Scottish financial services sector has tremendous opportunities for growth within the single European market?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. It is extremely encouraging that a Scottish company such as Christian Salvesen is taking over a Belgian company and James Howden and Weir Pumps is acquiring continental subsidiaries. That clearly demonstrates that a number of the most effective Scottish companies appreciate the opportunities offered by the single European market.

Training Courses

11. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people have successfully

completed a Manpower Services Commission training course in Scotland during the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available about total completions over the past 10 years, but I can say that 522,328 young people between the ages of 16 and 18 entered training programmes during that time.

Mr. Brown: Does the Minister agree that many trainees never finish their courses because of accidents? Has he ever heard of James McCormack, a young constituent, who died in 1985 as a result of injuries sustained in a company called MacGregors Quayside Mills, which is based in Leith? Does he appreciate that that family, as well as their son, suffered greatly? Has he ever understood that compensation was denied to that family? Does he appreciate that a court in Sheffield ruled only recently that the Manpower Services Commission is legally responsible for the accidents to and the death of MSC trainees? Will that English ruling prevail in Scotland? Will compensation —not that money is important—be paid to the McCormack family to make amends for what went wrong in the past? More important, will he ensure that such individuals—they are called trainees—are properly protected in the future? It is about time that the Minister spoke.

Mr. Lang: I am happy to agree with the hon. Gentleman on his last point. Obviously accidents at work are to be deplored and should be guarded against. I know that the greatest care is taken by the MSC, now the Training Agency, to try to ensure that accidents to young people on training courses are kept to an absolute minimum and, if possible, avoided at all costs.

With regard to completion of courses, the hon. Gentleman might like to know that in recent years more than 70 per cent. of those completing YTS have either gone into employment or on to further training and education.

Mr. Ron Brown: For the sake of the McCormack family——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that all young people in Scotland have the opportunity to benefit from training schemes, especially disabled young people? Can my hon. Friend give the figures on the number of disabled young people who have completed such training courses? Can he also reassure me that steps are taken to ensure that access to training places is suitable for disabled people?

Mr. Lang: I regret that I cannot give my hon. Friend figures without notice, but he is right to emphasise the importance of training for disabled people. I am particularly encouraged by the high proportion of Scottish companies that are successful in the fit for work awards. Only last week I presented one to IBM in Greenock, a winner for the third year in succession.

Uniform Business Rate

12. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research he has commissioned into the impact of a uniform business rate in England and Wales on Scottish business; and what are its findings.

Mr. Rifkind: The introduction of the uniform business rate in England and Wales in 1990 will be phased in gradually over a number of years. It is our intention to move towards a common rate on the same time scale in Scotland. I do not therefore think that research is required.

Mr. Worthington: I congratulate the Secretary of State on his 100 per cent. record; for about the 20th time he has failed to answer the question. What research has been conducted into the impact on Scotland of a uniform business rate in England and Wales? No research has been conducted. It is a gross dereliction of duty. Scottish business will be damaged by the impact of a uniform business rate in England and Wales. Will the Secretary of State confirm that no research has been done?

Mr. Rifkind: I actually said that in my original reply, if the hon. Gentleman had taken the courtesy to listen to it. I pointed out that the reason is that we intend to introduce a common rate poundage in Scotland over the same time scale. Therefore, by the time the uniform business rate is in operation there will be a common rate poundage throughout the United Kingdom. I can keep repeating the point if it helps the hon. Gentleman. I can give him information, but I cannot give him wisdom.

Mr. McAllion: By controlling the rate of increase in the non-domestic rate, the Secretary of State for Scotland ensures that the poll tax payer has to pay more than would otherwise have been the case. What will happen to the poor people who cannot afford inflated poll taxes? So far the Secretary of State has given them no advice. The only alternative that the Government have offered to them is to escape liability by removing their names from the electoral register. Is that what the Secretary of State wants?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows that that does not lead to their escaping liability for community charge. I trust that he is making that clear to his constituents, because that is the legal position. The hon. Gentleman also knows perfectly well that those on low incomes can receive up to 80 per cent. rebate on the community charge for which they are liable.

Mr. Maclennan: On the substance of the question, does the Secretary of State believe that phasing of the introduction of the uniform business rate will be to the advantage or disadvantage of Scottish business? What calculations has he made?

Mr. Rifkind: It would be to the disadvantage of Scottish business if nothing of a similar kind were happening in Scotland over the same period. I have emphasised that the introduction of a common rate poundage throughout the United Kingdom will take place over the same time scale north and south of the border.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that Scottish business expects to have an advantage compared with the rest of the United Kingdom? Will he also bear in mind the position within Scotland and

ensure that businesses in low-rated authorities, such as Kincardine and Deeside, do not suffer averaging up at the same time as others benefit from averaging down?

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. It is precisely for that reason that we are moving towards a common rate poundage throughout the United Kingdom and not seeking to introduce a UBR that involves the pooling of rates income and its redistribution. It is precisely to protect local authorities such as my right hon. Friend has referred to.

Caledonian MacBrayne

13. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of vessels which Caledonian MacBrayne expects to order over the next five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Caledonian MacBrayne's corporate plan over the next five years includes proposals to replace two major vessels and six minor vessels. All these proposals for new ships will need to be subject to a detailed economic appraisal and review in the light of Caledonian MacBrayne's requirements before any order can be approved.

Dr. Godman: Given that in the light of the Transport (Scotland) Bill the Secretary of State might soon be given the sobriquet of Mr. CalMac, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman advance one of the contracts and give it to Fergusons of Port Glasgow in order to ease the parlous circumstances of that yard?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *rose*——

Dr. Godman: One moment; I have waited a long time for this question. May I point out to the Minister that bids for that yard were submitted to British Shipbuilders over a month ago? Since then we have heard nothing. The uncertainty is creating anxiety. It is a disgraceful state of affairs. When will the Secretary of State for Scotland show some concern for the people of the lower Clyde? *[Interruption.]* Be quiet, silly old fool.

Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not hear anything out of order. Let us get on with it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: To order an earlier than planned replacement of a CalMac ferry would be more costly, and orders cannot be directed to particular yards. I assure the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that any yard capable of building a CalMac ferry will be given the opportunity to tender when CalMac seeks to place orders. The hon. Gentleman's second question is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. British Shipbuilders has received several bids for the yard which are still being evaluated. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is keeping in close touch with the matter.

Sir Charles Morrison: In the interests of the comfort of the passengers travelling on CalMac ships, will my hon. Friend ensure that the ships are built to take into account the fact that the weather can be rough on the west coast of Scotland? None of CalMac's present steamers seem to take account of the fact that it is often rough.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend speaks from personal experience of countless voyages to Isla. At Christmas I went on a CalMac ferry which was enormously impressive and the highest standard of service was being given.

Community Charge

14. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect that the poll tax has had on electoral registration in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since electoral statistics in 1989 show increases in the number of electors in some local authorities and decreases in others, it is not clear what effect, if any, the advent of the community charge has had on electoral registration.

Mr. Ross: The Minister must know that registration officers are using the valuation roll and the electoral register to impose the poll tax. Given that 25,000 young Scots are no longer on the voters' roll, will he now admit that that was one reason why the Government imposed the poll tax in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no conclusive evidence. I shall give the hon. Gentleman three reasons for change. First, a general election is certainly not imminent. Secondly, there have been changes in practice by electoral registration officers. Thirdly, there have been changes in dual registration which has taken place, quite legitimately, for example, by students and second home owners. In a considerable number of authorities, the number of electors has increased. That has happened in 19 districts and in two regions and two island authorities.

Mr. McKelvey: Does not the Minister realise that in a well-heeled district where residents will gain from the poll tax they will, of course, register. In areas such as mine, Kilmarnock, many people are caught in the poverty trap. I can well afford to pay the poll tax and will make a profit from it. I shall refuse to pay the poll tax, sound in the knowledge that it will be extracted at source. However, those people who, unlike me, are unemployed and cannot pay the poll tax will, for the first time, find that the tax can be extracted from their benefits, not by negotiation or agreement, but by mandate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If there is any grain of truth in the allegations that the drop in the roll is in any way attributable to the community charge, and that people are seeking to avoid their responsibilities, even if they receive a rebate, hon. Members who encourage non-payment of the community charge have a heavy responsibility to bear. I have a Labour party leaflet which says:

> "There is a country where the right to vote was won after years of long and bitter struggle. The present government wants to change that right. They are making all adults pay to be registered."

Not only is that completely untrue but it provides a disincentive for people to register on the electoral roll which is their inalienable human right.

NHS Reform

15. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had supporting the proposals for reform of the National Health Service.

Mr. Rifkind: Most submissions on the White Paper have shown strong support for certain proposals and criticism of others.

Dr. Moonie: Surprise, surprise. I have received 600 repesentations on the proposals, and all of them have been negative. I suppose that that is hardly surprising either. One proposal that most Opposition Members would support is the one involving computerisation in hospitals. How many health boards in Scotland have the full complement of computer staff?

Mr. Rifkind: I would need notice of that question, but I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman is provided with the necessary information. I was surprised to hear him say that all the 600 representations that he has received were negative, because the hon. Gentleman might assist us in putting the other side of the coin. In fact, he has already done so. A rather splendid document was issued by the Labour party on 12 April and signed by the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). On page 3, there is a heading:

"What's good in the White Paper:"

It goes on to tell us:

"Quality of care . . . efficiency in the delivery of care . . . more information available to consultants and general practitioners . . . further devolution of management to hospital and unit level . . . a flexible accounting system to reflect clinical led doctors/patient choice . . . audit."

I can only express the hope, but not the expectation, that the BMA will prove as objective as the hon. Gentleman in realising the many virtues in the White Paper.

Community Charge

16. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has regarding the reductions in combined rent and rate bills for tenants in the private sector following the implementation of the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has received a number of representations from tenants about the level of the their rents following the introduction of the community charge. In addition, several hon. Members, together with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and some individual authorities, have made general representations on this matter.

Mr. Griffiths: Do the Minister and the Secretary of State realise that thousands of landlords in Scotland are both pocketing the existing rate charges and ensuring that their residents pay the poll tax? Up to £30 million is being made in windfall gains from the collection of such phantom rates. Why does the Minister not bring in legislation similar to section 16 of the Valuation and Rating (Scotland) Act 1956 to make it illegal for landlords to charge for rates that they are not collecting?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to say that there is a remedy for all the tenants concerned. If the tenancy is regulated, the rent should be registered with the rent officer; if it is an assured tenancy, the tenant will have a written statement of the terms of the tenancy to identify any element for rates. *[Interruption.]* That is in the Scottish Act, and it was the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) who particularly asked for the concession to be made.

The leaflet "Tenants and the Community Charge" was drafted specifically to ensure that tenants were aware of their rights in this connection. The leaflet has been circulated to local authorities, housing associations, Scottish Homes and others, but the key message to tenants is that the remedies are there and available to them if they believe that their landlords are wrongly seeking to charge them for rates.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 19 MAY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Roger Gale
Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith
Mr. Andrew Faulds

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As, for obvious reasons, we have no Scottish Law Officer here, will the Governor-General and his cronies ensure that the ruling in a Sheffield court regarding the protection of Manpower Services Commission trainees will prevail in Scotland? Will compensation be paid to the McCormack family, and to other families who have suffered in the past? This is an important point.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman asked that question during Scottish Question Time, although he may not have liked the answer. There are other ways for him to seek an answer, and if he would like to come and see me I might be able to give him a hint.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House are worried that as yet the Government appear to have made no statement about the events taking place at Risley. Can you tell us when a statement is likely to be made? This is a matter of concern not only for officers but for those who remain at the centre.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no indication of a statement.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Although you have been given no indication that there is to be a statement, the Leader of the House is present, and I should like, on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, to associate myself with the request that a statement be made about Risley as soon as possible.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When Risley closes, as we can see that it will, there will be extra problems for the Liverpool area. There must be a statement at the earliest opportunity so that the prison officers and others at the Liverpool prison know precisely what will happen.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that that will be heard by those who are responsible for making statements.

BILL PRESENTED

Housing Act 1985 (Amendment)

Mr. Harry Greenway, supported by Sir Jim Spicer, Sir George Young, Mr. Robert Rhodes James, Mr. John Wheeler, Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. John Redwood and Mr. Den Dover, presented a Bill to amend the Housing Act 1985; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 12 May and to be printed. [Bill 132.]

HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Ordered,

That the Human Organ Transplants Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee—[*Mr. Maclean.*]

Public Service Contract

3.34 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a public service contract, with compensation on failure to supply, between community charge and ratepayers and local authorities; and between consumers and public services.

Compensation when a service is not supplied is a buzz word. It is high on the agenda of consumer affairs, and rightly so. Compensation from British Rail when it fails to deliver people, even within its scandalous 10-minute margin of error, will strike a chord with passengers everywhere. Compensation from the Post Office when the much heralded special deliveries do not arrive the next day or when first-class post does not achieve the Post Office's national 90 per cent. target will create a value-for-money and redress-for-grievance concept almost undreamt of by long-suffering customers inured to monopolies.

This Bill is about quality of service contracts linked to penalties where those are not met. Penalties provide the motivation to the industry or service provider to meet quality standards and provide compensation for individuals who suffer sub-standard service. I am grateful to the National Consumer Council for its helpful advice in preparing for this motion.

I submit that compensation from the Land Registry or the Passport Office—the average wait at the six passport offices in response to straightforward applications is still 28 working days—from agencies and from Government Departments would warm the hearts of many individuals who have found that frustration and impotence can lead to that terrible state of banging one's head against a brick wall when lapses of service occur. Compensation might even render the parliamentary answer, "I will answer my hon. Friend as soon as possible," a fob-off of the past.

A serious application of the Bill might occur where health authorities have not treated patients for specified operations within a contracted period. Compensation could be used to allow the patients to go private. That kind of incentive could be effective where management is for or against private health care and the proposed changes.

The Bill is equally applicable to local authorities. Until a few years ago, local authorities were monopoly suppliers. They determined their own levels of service. Now increasingly, through competitive tendering, the focus is on customer service. Local authority managers are more arrangers of a mix of cost-effective options to deliver to their communities the service and care increasingly demanded of them. Public service contracts are a logical evolution from that. They can cover everything from a council's statutory obligations to emptying bins and keeping streets free from litter. The local government ombudsman already investigates reports of maladministration. If maladministration is found, he should be given powers to order compensation for the consumer, community charge payer or ratepayer.

Customer complaints about British Rail rose sharply in the 1980s from 60,000 a year to 92,000 a year. The figure was rising until 1986 when the publication of the figures was stopped. The Central Transport Consultative Committee states that complaints from area committees are still increasing. It believes that British Rail abandoned publishing complaint figures because such information "might be used to its disadvantage."

[Mr. David Porter]

The service offered to and from Liverpool street station since Easter can at the most charitable be described as a shambles. It typifies the problem. Vandalism on overhead lines and teething troubles with the new signalling are unavoidable. However, guards not giving information and journalists and photographers being escorted off station premises if they attempt to report the travelling public's fury is quite a different matter.

British Rail is reluctantly being forced to give the odd refund here and the occasional token compensation there. It should be dragged kicking and screaming, if necessary, into extending season tickets and paying compensation automatically. Under the rights of carriage regulations, it has no responsibility or obligation to deliver passengers in a seat or on time. Under the Bill, when a ticket is purchased a public service contract is entered into for that journey. Failure to deliver would bring agreed compensation. If a guard inspecting a ticket on InterCity found a passenger standing because no seats were left, he would issue a voucher for compensation for that service failure.

The same fundamental idea of delivery within an agreed, contracted time and within accepted comfort levels could apply to London Transport. Public service contracts, varying during the day to reflect the reality of customer use, would help London Transport management keep the paying, travelling public at the forefront of their minds.

Compensation and limited liability are now watchwords and an incentive within British Telecom. From 1 April this year, when British Telecom fails to restore a service within two days, or to provide a new service within two days of the agreed appointment date, it pays the customer £5 for every extra day of delay. Alternatively, British Telecom accepts liability for claims for loss up to limit of £5,000 for business customers and £1,000 for residential customers. That is a superb example of the private sector responding to public clamour for a better deal. That service obligation is very welcome—even though it did not apply years ago.

The Water Bill, now being considered in another place, will establish a customers' charter. Each company is required to draw up an individual code of practice about services, terms and conditions and how to complain, together with an entitlement for domestic customers of £5 cash or credit each day that certain basic and, in effect, contracted standards are not met. In what will be a private sector industry, there is expectation of good consumer practice and compensation. The regulation and enforcement of contracts is crucial. Be it electricity, water, gas, telecommunications or whatever, the regulator must be able to intervene in the quality of supply and service standards.

The obligation to supply individuals from a monopoly advantage is not covered by the Bill but should be noted as part of the process of dealing with utilities from the consumer's viewpoint. In the United States, most states have a utilities commission that can refer to the district attorney any cause for believing that a utility has violated a lawfully enforced service standard. The attorney files either a criminal prosecution or a civil suit for compensation against the company. That leaves the individual in a position to take civil action, knowing that the company has already been found guilty of breach of service regulation, and the individual usually gets out-of-court compensation.

That is a lengthy process, and we do not need to go down that road. We can have a simpler and a far more effective right to compensation. My Bill would complement the Consumer Protection Act 1961 and a tranche of consumer legislation. Compensation in private and public services is an idea whose time has come. I commend my Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Porter, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. James Paice and Mr. Tim Boswell.

PUBLIC SERVICE CONTRACT

Mr. David Porter accordingly presented a Bill to establish a public service contract, with compensation on failure to supply, between community charge and ratepayers and local authorities; and between consumers and public services: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 133.]

Glasgow, Central By-election

4.44 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): I beg to move,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the burgh constituency of Glasgow, Central in the room of Robert McTaggart, Esquire, deceased.

Mr. Speaker, may I—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn wish to intervene?

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The behaviour of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) in this instance has been shameful. Robert McTaggart's family still live in the constituency. Members of the hon. Gentleman's party have been running around the constituency looking for a seat, and the man is not yet cold in his grave.

Mr. Sillars: That would be fair comment if it were not for the fact that the Labour party has gone through the perfectly legitimate process of picking its candidate and holding its initial press conferences. The Labour party candidate's photograph appears in *The Scotsman* today, in which he looks sound. I intend to ignore absolutely the double standards of the hon. Member for Springburn.

All of us, irrespective of party, regret that a by-election was caused by the death of Bob McTaggart, who was one of the kindest people to me after my victory in the Govan by-election. He went out of his way to tell me that, although we represented different political parties and had our differences, we represented adjoining constituencies and that there would be no differences whatsoever on matters affecting people. Like every other right hon. and hon. Member, I valued him as a human being, and it is a matter of regret that a by-election has been caused by his death.

No one in Scotland will be worried by the fact that we are debating a by-election writ which takes precedence over a guillotine motion on the so-called Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill, particularly a guillotine motion which allocates only one day for the majority of Scottish Members of Parliament to discuss the Bill on Report and Third Reading and when six English Tory Members have had ample time in Committee to pass judgment on Scottish education and, in the view of many people, to damage it. However, this debate takes precedence.

Before I explain in full my reasons for suggesting that a by-election should be held—I am open to argument that a by-election should not be held, such is the character of these debates—I cast my mind back to the 1970s when the Labour party offered tough opposition to a Conservative Government not only on such matters, but on other procedural devices, and talked away the day and the night, together with the business and the following day's business. No doubt that opportunity will arise later.

There are several reasons for suggesting that the motion for a writ should be moved and accepted today for the by-election in Glasgow, Central. My research was stimulated by the significant speech made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 20 January 1989, when he moved the writ for the Richmond by-election. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not present, but I understand that this is an important day for England and Wales in electoral terms. The hon. Gentleman explained:

> "Once one gets to know the rules and procedures in any walk of life"—

and the hon. Gentleman has been here for a while—

> "that knowledge can be very handy. Some of us are very thorough about doing so."

I thought that on Budget day, but I was not as thorough as I should have been. The hon. Gentleman went on to say:

> "To get a writ through from the Back Benches, as opposed to moving it from the Dispatch Box, the first point one discovers is that it is the first item of business and should precede everything else. If a writ is to be moved on a day when there are parliamentary questions, it must be done at the beginning of business. If it is objected to, then it can be dealt with after Question Time. It can take up a considerable amount of time."

We shall prove that. He continued:

> "It is no bad thing for the House to discuss a writ. It may be that in future, given that Back Benchers as well as Whips can move a writ, that device will be used extensively."

That is hypothetical and remains to be seen.

I read that out because it is astonishing but true that many Members of Parliament do not know a great deal about parliamentary procedure because they are looked after by the Whips. I say that not in any pejorative sense, but because we come here as brand new Members and there is no primer to tell us anything. Someone says, "Here are the Standing Orders, here is 'Erskine May'. Go and read them." But that is extremely difficult.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): About time.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman says, "About time."

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is bedtime reading.

Mr. Sillars: It is rather heavy bedtime reading.

If an hon. Member is elected in the summer, it is difficult for him to pick up parliamentary procedures. It would be a good idea if your Department, Mr. Speaker, ran seminars for Back Benchers explaining Standing Orders and their cross-references with "Erskine May". We would all know more than we do and would be more effective when dealing with the nice gentleman, the Leader of the House.

During the debate on the issue of the writ for the Richmond by-election, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) made a confession to the hon. Member for Bolsover. He said:

> "I just want to thank my hon. Friend because by his deep reading of 'Erskine May', he has revealed that there are things in it which he wotted not of. We have not a lot of privileges on the Back Benches, but I now gather that we have privileges that we did not know about. My hon. Friend will remember that I said to him this morning that I did not know that a Back Bencher could move a writ. We have a tendency to convey to people that we Back Benchers know everything, but it is obvious that we do not. My hon. Friend has taught me that I can move a writ. I should like to try some time, so I shall study the procedure."

An hon. Member of such a long experience did not know that he could move a writ for a by-election. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman)——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman as I know that some of my hon. Friends do not want this debate to continue—nor do I particularly. Some hon. Members who were elected to the House in 1964 listened to people such as Emrys Hughes, Sydney Silverman and many others. We learned much about parliamentary procedure from them. Hon. Members who are newly elected to the House learn by listening and participating in debates. I make that point

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

because Emrys Hughes and those from whom I learned helped me to understand "Erskine May"—a great tome that I should not want to carry to bed with me. The hon. Gentleman should take that into consideration.

Mr. Sillars: One of the difficulties is that "Erskine May" is occasionally amended. Indeed, your rulings, Mr. Speaker, can amend it. There is the further problem that Standing Orders change frequently.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) mentioned Emrys Hughes. I most remember him for his remark in the 1966 general election that the only difference between a Tory Government and the great train robbers was that the great train robbers forgot to be elected. I remember Emrys Hughes saying that from a platform in Ayrshire.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): As Emrys Hughes said, never trust a traitor.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Emrys Hughes was never a traitor to the Labour movement.

Mr. Sillars: That is right; and I am not a traitor to the Socialist movement.

There is a danger of my being drawn outside the parameters of the debate. I shall be careful about that; I do not want another expulsion. I am trying to read the wise words of the hon. Member for Billericay, who intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Bolsover. This shows how wide, and at the same time how narrow, this debate is. The hon. Lady said:

"I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that by-elections are generally seen as a barometer of public opinion."

That is an important point.

There is another important matter. What happens if a writ is moved and defeated? The hon. Member for Bolsover has done a great deal of reseach and I compliment him on that. He said:

"At least one Conservative Member has spoken of dilatory action. It was suggested a few days ago that the moving of a writ was a means of developing such action. The Clerks were unsure of the ground here. This has been a learning process for me, my hon. Friends and those people who advise the Chair, because that point was a matter for consideration. I shall not name names, but there was a complete blank on the question as to whether it was possible for a further writ to be moved within days of another having been moved and not dealt with satisfactorily. That very question was a puzzle for at least a week.

So far as I understand it—I shall be on the record in *Hansard*—the matter has been resolved."

So far as I am aware, there has been no correction to that authoritative statement by the hon. Member for Bolsover. He said:

"The writ can be moved again. However, a writ cannot be moved again—this is another part of the learning process—if it is defeated. That is why I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow that I am not hereabouts trying to get it defeated. I would not attempt to do that, because I want to win over the House and get the writ accepted; but, if I thought for one moment that I could not carry a majority, I would make absolutely sure that it was not defeated. If it is defeated, that is a different question. That would mean that the writ would fall for the rest of the Session, and none of us want that."—[*Official Report*, 20 January 1989; Vol. 145, c. 592-601.]

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What has that to do with the price of haggis?

Mr. Sillars: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's intervention is intended as an insult, but I do not take it as such.

That is the position on whether the writ when moved can be defeated and on when it is moved but does not reach a vote. May I refer also——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Hesitation.

Mr. Sillars: There will be one or two hesitations.

In column 634 of the same debate, the hon. Member for Bolsover is reported as noting the number of political issues that can be raised, which is part of the drawing of parameters in a debate of this kind.

It is worth having a look at "Erskine May". I hope that no one objects, but one must start at page 26, move on to page 27 and then go much further. Under "New Writs" on page 26 "Erskine May" states:

"Whenever vacancies occur"—

[Interruption.] I am not saying anything that differs from the statement of the hon. Member for Bolsover in the sense of explaining the background to this writ and the procedural basis upon which I am moving it. "Erskine May" states:

"Whenever vacancies occur in the House of Commons from any legal cause, after the original issue of writs for a new Parliament by the Crown, writs are issued out of Chancery by a warrant from the Speaker, which he issues, when the House is sitting, upon the order of the House of Commons. The causes of vacancy are the death of Members or their succession to a peerage, the acceptance of a disqualifying office, the elevation of Members to the peerage, bankruptcy, lunacy, the establishment of any other legal disqualification for sitting and voting in the House of Commons, and the determination of election judges that elections or returns are void."

"Erskine May" goes on to deal with "Vacancies during a session". I shall not weary you with that, Mr. Speaker, because you must have read these passages several times, if not in preparation for me, at least in preparation for the hon. Member for Bolsover when he moved his writ.

I shall refer not only to Scottish but to United Kingdom issues. In doing so, Mr. Speaker, I shall be invoking your own good authority. On 6 March, at the start of our proceedings on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) raised a point of order. He said:

"We would be happy—I am sure that I speak for all Scottish Opposition Members—if the House would leave all the proceedings on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill to the individual votes of Scottish Members."

You, Mr. Speaker, replied:

"I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is a United Kingdom Parliament, and long may it remain so."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 622.]

You are perfectly entitled to hold that view—I accept that—but your remarks must mean that matters relevant throughout the United Kingdom are relevant to a debate on the issue of a by-election writ in any constituency in the United Kingdom.

When I had read "Erskine May", I read Professor Bradley, professor of constitutional law at Edinburgh university, who is such an authority on constitutional law that Lord Denning has been known to use him when trying to circumvent the rule that judges cannot refer to *Hansard* when interpreting an Act of Parliament. One is allowed to quote authoritative works of lawyers in court, so Lord Denning has been able to quote Professor Bradley quoting

Hansard. I say that not so much to praise Professor Bradley as to show that he is an authority on constitutional legal matters.

I was astonished to read—we all have something to learn—that there is no rule about moving a writ. The moving of a writ rests upon the decision of the Government Whips if a seat has previously been held by a member of the governing party or on the decision of the Opposition Whips if the seat has been held by the Opposition. There is no hard and fast rule, so, in theory, we could leave people unrepresented for a very long time.

The convention is that a writ must be moved within three months. That arose when Dick Taverne resigned over the European Community, and the writ for the Lincoln by-election was not moved for six months. There were several rows, and agreement was reached through the usual channels that writs should be moved within three months.

That made me think about the relationship of this House and the political parties with the electors and led me to question whose primary interest is at stake when we decide to move a writ. Is it that of the people and their need to be represented, or is it that of the political parties, which need tactics and manoeuvrability? I concluded that it was not the interests of the people. I have some experience of by-elections. As Labour Members constantly remind me, I used to be a member of the Labour party. I was taught under the Chief Whip-ship of Bob Mellish, who was a past master in these matters.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Unlike the present crowd.

Mr. Sillars: I did not say that; the hon. Member up there said it.

Mr. Faulds: It was not "the hon. Member up there" who said it; it was the hon. Member for Warley, East.

Mr. Sillars: I apologise, but I have not yet caught up with the boundary changes that took place while I was away from the House.

There is no justifiable democratic reason for the practices that have obtained hitherto in respect of by-election writs. The proprietorial instinct displayed in this place is offensive to those democratic principles. Political parties seem to believe that they own seats and, in a sense, people. We talk of "their seat"; it is normal parlance. We hear that a seat is "a Labour seat", "a Tory seat", "an SLD seat" or "an SNP seat". Of course it is not. The political parties are given power by the people for a given length of time. An accident, death or resignation can end the link between the people and the party. It is the people with whom we should be concerned.

The political parties manipulate by-election dates. I have some experience of that and I confess my past guilt. When I was the Labour candidate in the South Ayrshire by-election I was consulted by the Labour party's national agent, Ron Hayward, about the best date for the by-election. We took into account such factors as the compilation of the electoral register, but the main factor was party advantage. On that occasion, I was the beneficiary. Last autumn, in Govan, I was a victim of the political parties' ability to manipulate the dates. The writ was issued on the day on which Bruce Millan resigned. We all know that the Labour party decided that a snap election would be the best way to outflank the SNP. Labour thought that we would not have time to get our organisation going because we would have a cold start. That mistake in tactical judgment is irrelevent to my principal point, that the decision was made by reference to the Labour party's tactical need at the time.

The electors of Vale of Glamorgan vote tomorrow. We are adult politicians and I do not think that any of us would dispute the fact that the Tory party has tried to bury that by-election among the England and Wales county elections. The Tories fear a defeat and hope that people will lose sight of it among other results elsewhere. It will be seen as only one factor among many in people's assessment of 10 years of the Prime Minister's dictatorship of the country. I think that that is wrong, and that the needs of the people for representation should determine by-election dates. Those needs should be made the highest consideration, and that principle should be formalised either in "Erskine May" or in our Standing Orders so that party advantage is no longer the prime factor.

I worry that the Labour party will attempt—it is normal practice—to set a date for the Glasgow, Central by-election to bury it in the European election campaign, for a variety of tactical reasons. Perhaps Labour thinks that SNP will be overstretched if it has to run European and parliamentary elections at the same time, and that people will not be able to congregate in Glasgow, Central as they did in Govan because they will be trying to win in the north-east and in the south. There is also a wee bit of worry about what the result would be, and it would be quite nice for the Labour party to bury that as well. Everyone in the world leaks, and the political parties are no different. There have been leaks in the Scottish press to the effect that the Scottish Labour party has fixed its eye on 15 June, for that very reason.

Matters of domestic sovereignty over which Parliament still has absolute control—or matters of shared sovereignty involving a decision to cast a vote in Brussels or elsewhere—should not be taken into the context of a European election. Matters of domestic sovereignty should be isolated so that people may understand the issues and may be given the opportunity to decide who they want to represent them and on which issues. I suggest that we should consider the different ways in which a vacancy can occur and fix these matters in relation to that.

Some people do not realise it, but the House still has enormous sovereignty. For example, the Government decide the poll tax, policy in the National Health Service, and the monetary policy that affects interest rates. The Government determine what will happen to the Scottish Development Agency, which set up the Scottish homes organisation, which decides whether there will be legal reform and, if so, what measure we will get. The Government produce social security benefits. That has nothing to do with Europe. Therefore, it is important that the two mandates are separated. There can be a party advantage, but that is not the right way to go about it.

Opposed to my point of view, it could be pleaded that I am exercising the countervailing right within the rules to prevent that happening. According to pages 326 and 327 of "Erskine May", a Back-Bench Member has the right to move the writ for a by-election, which would take it out of the European elections as one could have done to take the Vale of Glamorgan out of the county elections.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Gentleman is putting forward a powerful

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

argument for taking the choice of the date of by-elections from parties and making it a constitutional matter. He could tap an equally rich vein in respect of general elections. They should not be a matter of party advantage, either. Are he and his colleagues in the Scottish National party prepared to participate in the procedures of the House, including perhaps a Speaker's conference or a Select Committee properly to consider those matters in the normal parliamentary way?

Mr. Sillars: That is an interesting point. The hon. Gentleman is an international lawyer and has a great interest in constitutional matters. He made a fair point. A Speaker's conference would clearly be beneficial. He asked whether we would participate. Of course, my colleagues and I would participate. Whenever there is an extension of democracy, the hon. Gentleman will find us participating. If I were to pursue that point, I might go outside the boundaries of order, and I am careful and anxious not to do that.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) was not given to doing exactly what the Whips told him. I have known him for a long time. He is the sort of chap who, because of democratic issues, would be compelled to move such a writ on his own initiative. However, there are other folk who are not of the same calibre as my hon. Friend. We are all politicians. Some folk would like to become Ministers or reach the Front Bench. Being in my unusual position, I am not subject to that pressure.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): The hon. Gentleman was at one time.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. As I said, I was taught under Bob Mellish. That was a rough experience. I was subjected to all the pressures that a Whips Office could bring to bear on a potential rebel. The hon. Gentleman will concede that it did not work. I have known it to work in other cases.

Mr. Heffer: It did not work in my case.

Mr. Sillars: No. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can tell the House about it later.

We cannot rely on the individual being able to withstand pressure in the House. If the SLD wished to make formal submissions through the usual channels, it would be useful to have a Speaker's conference on a range of matters, such as how we run the business here and how it affects people outside and our relations with them. We could put forward some ideas. That is part of the reason for arguing about the writ today.

There are two or three circumstances in which vacancies arise. First, there are straight forward resignations such as those of the two chaps who went off to Brussels to become commissioners. Secondly, there is a forced resignation—a Stonehouse-type situation—because matters become impossible or intolerable. Thirdly, there is death, where there is a common principle.

Parties need time to select candidates. I am not naive about that. The people count, but political organisations are the lifeblood of a modern democracy. For all the things that are said about political parties, they are extremely important to a democratic society. Parties must be acknowledged and the mechanisms must be given time to operate. There must be nominations and consultations. They differ.

The Labour party deals with affiliated organisations which have the right to nominate to the constituency Labour party general committee. I stand open to correction, but that list of nominations is examined by the executive of the general management committee to produce a short list. A new system has been introduced since my days in the Labour party. Names are taken to the national executive of the Labour party and, ultimately, a short list is handed back to the general management committee, which then makes the final decision on who the respective candidate is to be, and he is then endorsed by the national executive. One could complain that that is a somewhat elaborate system, but it is the Labour party's system and it is entitled to it.

The Communist party has a much shorter system. That party is likely to run in the Glasgow, Central by-election. The Scottish Socialist party, a new party in Scotland, has selected a candidate. We do not know enough about that party to know what its selection procedure is. The Tories go through whatever procedure they have. The Scottish National party has another procedure. Potential candidates are interviewed by an election committee. The election committee draws up a short list of candidates, which ultimately goes through our system, and the constituency association chooses a candidate.

It does not matter if it takes the Labour party a week longer than the SNP, or the Tories three days less than the Labour party. Four weeks are adequate. If a vacancy occurs at Christmas, we can make adjustments. On a resignation, a writ could be moved four weeks from the date when the Member resigned from the House of Commons. After a three-week election campaign and seven weeks after resignation, it will be over. Constituents would have had an opportunity to examine the issues, elect their Member of Parliament, and be represented in the House.

The House is only partly important. It is more important to be represented in the huge apparatus that now operates as Government. As you know from your previous and present experience, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of the legislation that goes through the House is not detailed. Most detailed legislation is in the form of statutory instruments. Any hon. Member who has had to deal with the Department of Health, the Department of Social Security, local authorities or regional councils knows how huge the apparatus of Government is. It is important that ordinary people in the street, electors with problems at local, regional and national level, should have an elected representative—it does not matter who he happens to be in the United Kingdom—who has authority to open doors, get answers to questions, find remedies and end injustice for his constituents. Seven weeks are ample.

The case of a death in a constituency is slightly different. One of the most objectionable aspects of the death of Bob McTaggart was the almost instant public press speculation about the coming electoral contest. Within my own family, I had reason to object personally to what happened, as we were placed in a most invidious position. Several hon. Members were placed in such a position. On the night that Bob McTaggart died, one of the television programmes in Scotland passed off his death and spent about 15 minutes analysing what would happen at the by-election. I do not dispute the need for

conventions, and perhaps there should be a convention with the press that, other than report the fact that someone has died, for at least four days afterwards there should be no other comment, and the family should have time to mourn and grieve without being upset by the kinds of comment that appeared in the press at the time of Bob McTaggart's death. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you did not mind my digression.

After a death in a constituency, the timetable should take account of the necessary human decencies. I suggest that two weeks should be allowed for the family to mourn and start to pull themselves together. There could be four weeks allowed for the selection procedure, and three weeks for the by-election campaign. Thus the time between the death and a Member taking his seat in this place would be nine weeks, a reasonable time, given that we are talking about a situation in which a family is in emotional difficulty.

It is also important that an independent timetable should operate, because of the significance of the by-election process. The hon. Member for Billericay said, during the Richmond by-election writ debate, that by-elections are regarded as a barometer of public opinion on certain issues at a certain time. Often by-elections are the key turning points in politics. Because of the strange, magic chemistry that operates, a by-election in one area is regarded by all pundits and practising politicians as making a key judgment for the whole nation. I am sure that that will be said of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election tomorrow.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order. On 1 February, I opposed the moving of the writ for a by-election at Richmond. I was given the strictest instructions to refer to no other by-election and to limit my remarks to the point of Sir Leon Brittan and the Richmond by-election. Has there been any relaxation of the rules, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: It will not surprise the House or the hon. Gentleman to know that I have been listening with the greatest care. Until now, I have not heard anything out of order.

Mr. Sillars: I am grateful for that ruling, Mr. Speaker, because I do not intend to stray beyond the permissible boundaries of this debate. The by-election for the hon. Gentleman's own seat of Linlithgow in 1962 was regarded as a turning point. I remember demonstrating outside the playhouse in Ayr when Harold Macmillan told the Conservatives that they had fallen very low in the hon. Gentleman's poll at the time. I do not want to upset the hon. Gentleman, because he is a tenacious man. I do not want to get him started on Leon Brittan, but if he stays long enough he will find that Leon Brittan is likely to figure in some way in the Glasgow, Central by-election issues —and that will be raised, not by me but by a very senior Conservative.

Mr. Heffer: The Labour party will win the election tomorrow handsomely.

Mr. Sillars: I am delighted to hear that, because anything that inflicts a defeat on the Tory Government, particularly after 10 years, is delightful.

Some by-elections have a special X factor, and we believe that their results are widely important. The Scots are canny people, not given to great emotional splurges. That is particularly true of individuals in the west of Scotland. There is a wide belief in Scotland that the Glasgow, Central by-election will be a major test of public opinion. I am not permitted to debate or give my own opinion on the issues involved as that would be out of order. That is a matter for the by-election itself. I have quoted the remarks of the hon. Members for Bolsover and for Billericay. It is certainly permissible on a Friday to refer to various issues that the electorate should address.

Another reason for my moving the writ this afternoon is that these issues command the attention of the people in Glasgow, Central who are regarded by many people as speaking on behalf of the much wider community in Scotland, and I believe that the Labour party would say that it was a community wider than Scotland.

The by-election also represents a very important test of all the political parties, because all the various positions could be wrapped up in the European election. As far as I am aware, all the candidates of the major parties have now been picked. An article in the *Glasgow Herald* is headed "Candidate chosen", and states:

> "An advertising executive from Largs has been selected as the Tory party's candidate for the forthcoming Glasgow, Central by-election. Mr. Alec Alan Hogarth aged 23, who was educated at Stirling university, was the youngest of five candidates shortlisted by the local party association for the by-election caused by the death of Labour's Mr. Bob McTaggart."

His candidature is an interesting factor because the Labour party is strenuously arguing that it will mount a legal challenge to the amount of advertising being carried out. Therefore, the living form of the Tory candidate raises one of the issues that will be before the people of Glasgow, Central. This is an issue that Her Majesty's Opposition want to take up with the Government—whether the Government are properly using money on advertising for objective matters or for party political matters. It is not up to me at this time to comment on that matter, but this highlights the importance of the issues before the people at this by-election.

As I said earlier, a new party, the Scottish Socialist party, has been formed by the former leader of the Labour group on Edinburgh district council, Alex Wood, a man for whom I have a great deal of regard. I hope that members of the Labour party retain for him the same personal regard, despite the fact that they may differ politically. Mr. Wood's party is running on an extraordinary ticket compared to the others. It is arguing that Scotland should not be part of the European Community.

Mr. Lamble: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sillars: I have no doubt that Alex Wood would like the hon. Gentleman to support him, but I think that there would be differences in other areas of that platform.

Then there is the Green party. I do not think that anyone doubts that the participation of the Green party —I say this as someone who is not a member of it—is important in the parliamentary democratic process.

There will be fringe candidates as well. An article in *The Scotsman* of 2 May is headed:

> "Former vice girl considers Glasgow's by-election fight".

It states:

> Lindi St-Claire, the former vice girl who stood as Miss Whiplash in the Richmond by-election, revealed yesterday she is considering standing in Glasgow, Central. Ms. St-Claire, who is campaigning in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election"—

[Mr. Sillars]

now I have mentioned both the Vale of Glamorgan and Richmond, Yorks by-elections—

"said yesterday that she had dropped the frivolous platform that she had at Richmond and now had a serious manifesto."

We shall have to wait and see what it is. It is important to note that the candidates are now lined up and that new political parties want to see how they get on in the political debate among the people of Glasgow, Central. That is one of the reasons that the House should accept the moving of the writ this afternoon.

I am arguing for a by-election that is separate from the European elections, because such a by-election, standing on its own, lays bare the important issues. It is an open test of public opinion on crucial issues. Local issues are involved, and it is important that a spotlight falls on an area in which there is a by-election because that often draws national attention to something that might be a local issue, but which requires the mobilisation of national or even wider resources to tackle it. In Govan, one local issue that emerged to unite all the candidates—nobody disagreed—was drugs abuse and the anxiety of mothers and fathers, especially mothers, about the condition of their young people who were denied work and who were often driven into abusing drugs to get by on a day-to-day basis.

That issue received national attention, wide action has been taken in the Govan area; and many people are now paying attention to that problem. I simply want to prove that local issues can arise during a by-election and that the publicity can benefit the local people and their needs.

There are also national issues in which the parties can test real live opinion through people casting their vote in the ballot box, as distinct from relying on the opinion of pollsters. Candidates can test local opinions and see whether they can be elected Member of Parliament as a living manifestation of the electorate's endorsement of their views. The other side of the coin is that there could be a manifestation of a rejection on the views of certain political parties.

I hope to persuade the House this afternoon of the need for an early by-election. I see that I have the keen attention of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), and no doubt during the by-election he will want to mount his latest hobby horse, which is the question of a referendum on the Union. As we pass each other in the streets of Glasgow, Central, and as the hon. Gentleman addresses vast numbers of people, he will be able to press home before the electors his idea of a one-question referendum. It will be interesting, and he should be given the opportunity to do so. It is not a position with which I agree, but I cannot comment on that this afternoon other than to note that that is the hon. Gentleman's position and that it should be tested. It could be argued that that is a legitimate proposal—I do not argue that—but one thing that is not in the question is his right to put forward that idea.

If I am to persuade the House to favour an early by-election, I must pray in aid the issues and the reasons for having an early test rather than a test on 15 June, when we could be buried in the European elections. I shall start with the local issues, and the best way of doing that is to describe the constituency. That will be handy because I am sure that we shall be inundated with English Members of Parliament who will get on the plane at Heathrow—or perhaps Gatwick if they prefer that service—and land at Glasgow. However, I shall take a bet that some will land in Edinburgh, not knowing quite which airport is which, but ultimately they will reach Glasgow, Central.

In a city in which one is a stranger, it almost impossible to say where its boundaries are and to assess its make-up. My own constituency of Glasgow, Govan—I say "my own" not in any proprietorial sense but to delineate it from Glasgow, Central—abuts that of Glasgow, Central, and it is sometimes hard to see where the boundary is. It must be the same in the city of Liverpool. As a Glasgow Member, I often receive letters from people who think that I am their Member of Parliament, but in fact they live just outside my constituency; and people in Govan might write to the Member of Parliament in an adjacent constituency, thinking that that hon. Member is their Member of Parliament.

I shall profile the constituency. Everybody should try to hold on to their copy of *Hansard*, because I shall try to be as accurate and objective as possible. There will be a big run on *Hansard* by English Tory MPs—I see Conservative Members nodding, and I pleased to note that those Members of Parliament will be coming up to Scotland, because they are in for an education when they come.

The constituency has been put together as a result of various boundary changes. Physically, the bulk lies to the south of the River Clyde, but important parts lie to the north also. Important landmarks in Glasgow are situated in the constituency, such as Langside, Queen's Park, Govanhill, Kinning Park, and Cessnock. These place names will bring back memories for my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) who was born in the Govan area and who will remember many of them. There are other famous places, such as Argyle street, one side of Buchanan street and Cowcaddens street. It will be interesting to see various people come up to Glasgow from the English Tory establishment. Since the last by-election, the transformation of Bridgeton Cross has been remarkable, and it will be pleasant to campaign and canvass in such areas. That is the broad geographic outline.

Parts of the constituency have a fairly transient population, mainly because of the numbers of students and nurses who live in them and who move on to other areas after they have finished their training or their studies. Those areas are concentrated around the Victoria infirmary and the Rotten Row maternity hospital. English Members must not read anything into that name; if they can stay here long enough—but not too long—I shall explain exactly what the Rotten Row maternity hospital is. There is also Duke Street hospital and the Royal infirmary. A whole range of local issues are relevant to the needs of the students and nurses in those areas. Indeed, a whole range of issues locally are affected by policies on the Health Service and a whole range of national issues also emerge, to which I shall come later.

The Crosshill and the Queen's Park areas comprise largely owner-occupied housing stock. That fact will probably excite Conservative Members because they have a strange notion that, if they turn folk into owner-occupiers, those people will become Tory voters. That is part of the social engineering that has been going on for a long time. I do not know about experiences south of the border, because I have not canvassed in England for many years—not since the tragic death of Iain Macleod. Therefore, although I am not an expert on English

domestic politics, many Tories have told me that, because of the increase in owner-occupation, there has been an increase in the Tory vote. Although Crosshill and Queen's Park comprise owner-occupied housing stock, other areas comprise mainly public sector houses.

Although the owner-occupied areas will excite Tory Members, I advise the hon. Member for Walton that the thesis of those hon. Members will be proved wrong north of the border. However, let them come and find out. That is part and parcel of the democratic exercise. Hundreds of people may come up, probably not on the normal shuttle but on a charter flight to Glasgow airport.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): My hon. Friend is whetting the appetite of all hon. Members, but, if anything, he is underselling the benefits of Glasgow, Central. It is difficult to say that to my hon. Friend, as his description of the constituency has been so good, but it is the heart of Glasgow. It contains the university, the cathedral and Barony parish, and I thoroughly recommend all hon. Members to visit that constituency. Glasgow is noted as a good-hearted city; I am sure that everyone will get a great welcome and will learn a great deal about Scotland, and in particular about Glasgow, from such a visit. I am pleased to listen to my hon. Friend's description of that excellent constituency.

Mr. Sillars: My hon. Friend is kind, but judging from his opening remarks, he is a little disappointed with my speech. I am, however, on page 1 only.

Glasgow, Central is an important constituency. Its sociological make-up and housing stock are varied. It is important to deliver several important notes to get a good picture of it. If my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East gives me time, I shall do justice to it.

In fact, we have plenty of time, as the business on the Order Paper is irrelevant to Scotland. If the Self-governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill never got through, no one would be the least bit bothered. Perhaps the Leader of the House considers that it would be a good idea to test the popularity of the Bill at the by-election. The English Tories will come up in chartered planes from Heathrow and no doubt they will be piloted by their six hon. Friends who are sitting on the Committee on that Bill.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Perhaps the plane will be piloted by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Mr. Sillars: Yes, of course. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Tayside, North is no longer with us, as he is a pilot along with everything else. We would have the thrill and pleasure of watching him piloting the plane carrying the English Tory Members. He would fly over Bearsden and such places, which would be fascinating, but I must not be distracted from my speech.

I have already said that Crosshill and Queen's Park are largely made up of owner-occupied homes and that other wards of the constituency are mainly made up of public sector housing. Despite the fact that the Queen's Park and Crosshill wards have such a large proportion of owner-occupied homes, those areas have a high level of unemployment; that is a local issue which must be addressed. However, unemployment is highest in the central and Carlton wards of the constituency.

Another important consideration is that the constituency is largely made up of the dispersed population from the old Gorbals area. All those folk coming up from south of the border will be amazed at the transformation of some parts of Glasgow. They will discover that what they associated with the Gorbals and the Glasgow of the past is unfair.

There are several relatively large ethnic minority concentrations in the wards of the constituency. The largest concentration is in Crosshill, where the new Commonwealth population account for 3·18 per cent. of the total population. Some 4·62 per cent. of the population were born in Pakistan. Part of the population is Chinese, some people come from Pakistan, and there are a number of Moslems in the constituency. The mosque is situated in that constituency; it is not only the religious heart, but the social heart of the Islamic community in Glasgow.

Another plug for Glasgow—I make no apologies for it—is that this year, the city is again repeating the Mayfest. The festival attracts many people from all over Glasgow and further afield. Glasgow will also be the cultural city of Europe in 1990, which is an acknowledgement of the transformation of some parts of the city. It would be wrong to say that the entire area has been transformed, because we still face enormous problems in the peripheral estates and in some of the inner-city areas. Nevertheless, Glasgow has made a great effort, which has been recognised.

Architecturally, Glasgow is a beautiful city. There are arguments between Glasgow and Edinburgh as to which, architecturally, is the loveliest city and which is the most important city in cultural terms. One of the issues that is likely to arise at the by-election comes from the Tory party. I see that the Chief Whip is looking worried, because he knows that when the Tories produce issues in Scotland they sometimes rebound on them. The Tory group on Glasgow district council wants to depose Edinburgh as the capital city of Scotland. The heart of the administration would be based in Glasgow, Central. The Tories are hard up for Scottish issues, but perhaps that suggestion will become a major debating point.

I have a home in Edinburgh and I have grown to love that city although I come from the west coast of Scotland. People might be tempted to consider the Glasgow Tory suggestion as part of the Edinburgh-Glasgow animosity, but there is an economic reasoning behind such a transfer, which would be relevant to the by-election. If the capital transferred to Glasgow, civil servants would transfer from Edinburgh. If Scotland became a free and independent nation within the European Community, there would be an aggregation of embassies and foreign organisation around its capital. Such a development would create jobs. Therefore, there is more than just the old Glasgow-Edinburgh animosity behind the idea proposed by the Tory leader on the Glasgow district council.

I will not bore the House with the previous election result, as I do not believe that the next one will mirror it. What about the people of Glasgow, Central, about whom we should be concerned? The population of the constituency is in a constant state of flux, although the overall size of the population has been relatively static for some years. The population is diverse, as it ranges from the Chinese community of Garnethill, the various ethnic minorities south of the river, the so-called yuppies in the Merchant city, to the homeless men who frequent the city's hostels. It is important to remember that there are many unemployed in the constituency.

[Mr. Sillars]

The constituency is also diverse in terms of where the young and the elderly are based. The first-voting age group, the 15 to 24-year-olds, represent 10,700 people, equivalent to 17·37 per cent. of the total population of the constituency. At the last count, there were 28,875 people in the 24 to 64-year-old age group, who account for 46·89 per cent. of the population. The mature section of the population is therefore relatively large. Those people have experienced life, they understand it and they have suffered a lot of knocks. The people who have endured a great deal throughout their lives, those aged 65 and over, account for 13,570 of the population, or 22·04 per cent. That percentage is higher than that for the city of Glasgow, so the local and national services for the elderly will be important in the by-election.

As I have said, various ethnic minorities are represented in the constituency. Garnethill is home to the Chinese community, and a relatively large number of Asian families live south of the river. Hon. Members who visit Glasgow will be aware that many Chinese people operate businesses in the centre of the city as well as in Glasgow, Central. The Chinese restaurants and take-aways provide an excellent service.

That community is interested in a number of domestic-foreign affairs issues which I am sure will be important to the by-election. I hope that I can prove to the House that, because of the issue which is of great importance to the Chinese community of Glasgow, Central—I shall discuss it later—it is necessary that we have an early by-election. In that way, the community could put its point of view, and elect a representative here who will argue its case strongly.

Then there is housing. This is all part of the profile. The public rented sector, including Scottish Homes, as it is now called—we used to call it the Scottish Special Housing Association—has 14,274 houses, representing 48·3 per cent. of the constituency's housing stock. Owner-occupiers have 9,615 houses, representing 32·51 per cent. of the total. That is higher than the average in some parts of western Scotland. The private rented sector totals 2,705, which is 9·14 per cent. Housing associations have 1,419 houses, representing 4·8 per cent.

There are only 367 sheltered units, representing 1·24 per cent. of the housing stock. That small number is not because of the failure of anyone representing the people to argue for resources to meet the needs of all people. Whatever political differences we may have in the House, we are all aware that constant pressure has been exercised to try to get the number of sheltered houses that our old people require. That will be a big issue in the election.

Next, there are vacant dwellings. I am not saying that the Leader of the House does not know anything about Scottish affairs. I would not insult him in that way. He has to sit through various debates to learn what is happening, but he would be the first to admit that he is not immersed in the detail of the Scottish political scene. He is nodding graciously. I thank him, and I say that in the kindest spirit.

I am glad that the Minister of State is here, because he can confirm that one of the biggest debates between Labour local authorities and the central Tory Administration is about vacant dwellings. The Tory central Administration keeps arguing that the number of vacant dwellings is entirely the fault of the local authority, and the local authority points out frequently that it would be better able to manage the housing stock if it had adequate capital and management money available. Again, that will emerge as a big issue.

The 23-year-old advertising executive who is the Conservative candidate will need to bone up on the issue. I am sure that in our candidate and in the Labour candidate he will face folk who are extremely well briefed on the problem of vacant dwellings. As I have said, the owner-occupied sector is relatively large. Most of those dwellings are in the areas that I have specified.

I should like to concentrate for a moment on housing associations. Although they provide a minority of the housing stock, housing associations in Glasgow are unique. They are mostly community-based. They do not have many counterparts south of the border. Most of the housing associations in the Scottish housing association movement are community-based. Not only do they provide homes but they manage them sensibly.

One great benefit of community-based housing associations is that they realise that there has been an exodus of talented people from the core of Glasgow. In Bill Taylor's days—Bill Taylor used to be the eminent leader of the Labour group in Glasgow when it was a city rather than a district council—the policy was to decant people. I think that there were 23 central development areas from which people were decanted to Girvan in Ayrshire, to East Kilbride, to Glenrothes and to Livingston new town. Glasgow lost many talented people through that policy. I think that it was a mistake, but I understand the motivation behind it. There was a great danger of the last of the community leaders going.

Along came the community-based housing association movement. It retained the leaders because it gave them something to work at; with their talents and abilities, they could rebuild and regenerate their areas. It gave a new confidence to Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and places in Shettleston. Because there are housing associations in those areas, it means that there will be sophisticated interrogation at public meetings by members of the management committees, not only on housing but on more general matters. There is Bridgeton and Dalmarnock housing association, Govanhill housing association, the West of Scotland housing association and the Glasgow Jewish housing association.

Housing is bound to be a central issue, on which people will come to a decision in regard to the policies of the different parties.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: My hon. Friend has been comprehensive in his look at Glasgow, Central. Obviously he has done a great deal of research. Am I correct in thinking that Glasgow, Central contains Glasgow's oldest house, Provand's Lordship, which is centuries old? That house has stood for a long time. I am sure that in the election people will be thinking about other problems apart from Glasgow's heritage. They will be concerned about modern problems of housing such as homelessness and dampness.

My hon. Friend has mentioned housing associations. Does he agree that, as well as looking at Glasgow's past, we should consider its present? If we consult the records, we find that the constituency also contains the notorious wynds of Glasgow, where there were terrible housing conditions in the last century. Looking to the 21st century, I hope that housing in Glasgow, Central will be in the mind of everyone connected with the by-election. Perhaps

my hon. Friend would consider modern issues such as homelessness and dampness, and the house condition survey, which might help us all to be better informed as we approach the by-election.

Mr. Sillars: I hope to have time to touch on such matters. In regard to Provand's Lordship, I am worried that the Government may want to privatise it. It is becoming quite an attraction in the centre of the city. A great effort is being made to upgrade the area. Renovation is going on across the way at Glasgow cathedral. It is the sort of thing that the Scottish Tories—no, I think that even the Scottish Tories would not want to privatise it. I am anticipating that the planeloads of English Tories coming north of the border, the No Turning Back group, the ideologues, will look at Glasgow, Central and ask, "What can we privatise?" I am worried about some of the key landmarks of Glasgow.

Of course, it is a free country. We cannot prevent them coming up. It might be better if we did not talk about some of the historic landmarks. Then they may pass them by and not realise how important they are. They may not realise the value attached to them and they may never dream of suggesting privatisation—not to the Minister of State but to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), one of the ideological group whose anchor is south of the border. Perhaps that is another reason for getting the by-election over as quickly as possible, so that we can get these planeloads of Tories up, round the streets and back on the plane. Then we will not be subject to the possible devastation of the privatisation ideology.

I am coming to the house condition survey. There is no way that I could persuade the House to accept the motion if I did not get through to it the fact that housing is a key issue, which requires representation at its fullest. It certainly had that from the previous Member. An analysis has been published recently of the housing survey of Glasgow. I do not intend to read the whole survey; that is not necessary to give the House a full flavour of the problems that we face. The survey was published in 1987. It points to the fact that 20,000 of the private housing stock are below a tolerable standard. That is 19 per cent. of the total stock. Despite that, the Scottish Office's initial allocation for 1989-90 for the private sector is £40·5 million, £10 million less than in 1988-89 and less than half of the £91 million requested by the city of Glasgow to try to tackle the problem of deteriorating housing stock in the private sector.

As my hon. Friends know full well, a number of people can own a house, but with the mortgage rates these days, they do not generate enough income to maintain the house to the standard required, and they occasionally need help from the public purse. The majority of the houses that are below a tolerable standard are to be found on the west and south sides of the Glasgow district council area. Therefore, they are partly in the Glasgow, Central constituency. The homes of owner-occupiers aged over 75, and privately rented houses in multiple occupation, are in considerably worse repair. That is the problem that my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East wanted me to address.

The Government's recent proposals to introduce means testing for grant aid would mean that many households will fail to qualify for aid. With the state of disrepair of some houses on the south side of the city—which embraces Glasgow, Central—that is bound to be an important issue in the campaign.

The right to work and to have a job—the unemployment level—is fundamental to working-class life. In the central area, unemployment among men is 32·8 per cent., among women it is 10·9 per cent., making a total of 23·7 per cent. In the Kingston area, there is 30·4 per cent. unemployment among men, 14·2 per cent. among women, making a total of 23·7 per cent. In Queen's Park ad Crosshill, which are the major owner-occupied areas, 18·7 per cent. of men are unemployed and 10·6 per cent. of women, making a total of 15·4 per cent. unemployment.

These are horrendous figures, which show the level of stress and strain that people in Glasgow, Central, who are working-class, are under day to day. Those people need relief and remedies as soon as possible. They need their problems brought to the fore and debated in this by-election, and to have a Member of Parliament to represent their demands for remedial measures from the Government.

I am not taking sides, because I am not allowed to do so during this debate. However, I do not think that anybody would disagree that these are pretty horrendous figures, which paint a social picture of considerable anxiety to every decent human being in our society.

Glasgow, Central has high employment, but it has major employers. No doubt it will be important for all the candidates to go round these major employers; no doubt the candidates will wish to talk to them about the possibility of increasing unemployment. I shall quote a few of them to show that I am not talking about fly-by-night companies. They include Britoil plc, the South of Scotland electricity board, which is a candidate for privatisation, so an important issue at the by-election will be to discover what the score will be for employment with that company after privatisation, Scottish Gas, Craig Nicol Ltd., Sunblest Bakeries (GLW) Ltd., S. Meadow Ltd., J. Gelfor Ltd., D. C. Thomson and Company Ltd., A. Goldberg and Sons, Lewis's Ltd., Marks and Spencer plc, Boots the Chemist Ltd., British Home Stores Ltd., the Littlewoods Organisation Ltd., Gardner Merchant Ltd., the Albany hotel, the Hospitality inn, the Ingram hotel, British Rail, Denholm Ship Management Ltd., the Post Office, British Telecom, the Clydesdale Bank plc, the Royal Bank of Scotland plc, the Commercial Union Assurance Company Ltd., Scottish Boiler and General Assurance Company Ltd., the Scottish Mutual Assurance Society, Arthur Young, the Ministry of Defence, the procurator fiscal's offices, the Greater Glasgow health board.

I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I do not wish to try your patience, and have therefore quoted only a sample of the major employers in the constituency. Each of the employers in that list employ at least 200 people. The following employers employ over a thousand or several thousand. These are the district and regional councils, the Greater Glasgow health board, the university of Strathclyde, education in general, the retail industry in general, Britoil plc, Scottish Gas, British Rail, the various bus stations and British Telecom.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Most of the employers that my hon. Friend mentioned appeared to be in the service sector. Does he agree that one of the major problems facing us in Scotland is to restore our manufacturing base which has been so severely cut during the past 10 years

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

under this Administration? Many people, particularly in Glasgow, want to go into the manufacturing industry. Having said that, the service industries are important. My hon. Friend mentioned education and the university of Strathclyde. Surely the voters in that area who are employed by such organisations would want to pass a clear comment on the content of the legislation currently being dealt with in Committee, on which the Government are attempting to curtail debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) is going into detail about his constituency. I should like to hear a little bit more about how he relates that information to having a by-election now.

Mr. Sillars: There is no problem for me in doing that. I am pointing out that, from this profile, we can quite easily pick out the kind of issues that demand immediate public attention and action through the election machinery that operates in this country. For example, the whole of the Glasgow, Central constituency falls in the Greater Glasgow health board area, and contains several hospitals. I understand your anxiety about the parameters of this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but what I have to say will settle your mind.

There are several hospitals within the boundaries. These include the Victoria infirmary, Duke street hospital, the Royal Samaritan hospital for women, the Royal infirmary, which is a teaching hospital, and the Rotten Row maternity hospital; and the health board is a major employer in the area. That evidence makes it pretty clear that local issues, such as the privatisation of domestic services in the hospitals will be raging issues in Glasgow, Central. There is no question of that. I found that, at the Southern General hospital in my constituency, a big issue was whether the catering and cleaning services—which are manned by low-paid workers, many of them widows—should be privatised.

It is not your fault, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but one matter of which you are not aware is that there is much tension between the community of Glasgow and those who run the Greater Glasgow health board. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State is listening to this. There is more than a deep suspicion that the Tories have loaded the membership of the Greater Glasgow health board with hard-faced Tories, who are out to privatise everything that they can get their hands on inside the Health Service in Glasgow.

We have had representations down here from the trade union movement about the number of trade unionists who have been knocked off board after board. The representation of the working-class people of Glasgow on the Greater Glasgow health board is a disgrace. That is bound to be a major issue.

Another factor of which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not be aware, but which should be registered as one reason for the by-election, is that the general manager of the Greater Glasgow health board is not the most liked character throughout the city of Glasgow. The authoritarian way in which he runs the Greater Glasgow health board is deeply offensive to the communities throughout Glasgow. Nobody will be able to prevent it from being a big issue in the by-election campaign.

Drugs are a problem in Glasgow, Central, as they were in Govan. There are a number of neighbourhood watch schemes. That may sound like a good arrangement. Hon. Members may assume that crime will not be a big issue in the by-election, and wonder why that factor should influence a decision to hold an early election. The tragedy is, however, that most of the neighbourhood watch schemes are located in the Merchant city area, where new developments are taking place. There are no such schemes in the rest of the constituency, and there is considerable anxiety in those areas about the level of crime experienced under the present Government. Later, I shall quote figures relating to law reform which demonstrate the enormous increase in activity in sheriff courts and high courts since the Government came to power.

Let me point out to the Minister, who is a Scottish advocate, that the neighbourhood watch scheme is bound to be an issue. I know a bit about such schemes because I have a flat in the Merchant city area, where the scheme does not always work.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is not the real crime that committed against the Scottish working people, who have suffered tremendously under Thatcherism and will suffer again as this Parliament evolves? North of the border there is a feeling that politics belongs to the people, not just to politicians: that Socialism is a matter of fighting back, of resolving issues on the basis of community and of saying, in effect, "We can defeat this lot," because we are stronger outside than we are here. We can play games here, but we must emphasise our strength outside.

The Labour party must recognise the Scottish dimension. It must recognise that the Scottish working class is waking up and will take the fight south of the border, especially on the poll tax. Basic rights must be fought for, and civil disobedience may be necessary to defend those rights.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In commenting on those remarks, I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) will link his answer to the date of the by-election.

Mr. Sillars: However advantageous or disadvantageous it would be to go down the path laid for me by the hon. Gentleman, it would be wrong for me to do so; I accept that entirely.

I was about to explain that I have practical experience of the neighbourhood watch scheme. I thought—I am sure that the electors of Glasgow, Central who have no such scheme think this as well—that it provided almost 24-hour cover. At about 1 am one night, the doorbell rang: I opened the window and looked out. Below stood three scruffy lads in jerkins, jeans and baseball boots.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): They were members of the SNP.

Mr. Sillars: No, they were not, believe it or not.

I thought, "Here we have three vandals." I was about to operate the neighbourhood watch scheme by crossing the landing and telling my neighbours that there were three vandals outside pressing door bells. However, I asked, "Who are you?" And they said, "We are the police."

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Come on, deal with the date of the by-election.

Mr. Sillars: If the hon. Lady waits long enough perhaps she will vote with me in the Lobby, because I am getting her wound up to support me. I am pleased that she has decided to intervene, and if she wants to get to her feet, I shall be more than happy to give way.

The "three vandals" turned out to be three policemen telling me that my car had just been "done" in the back court. There are defects in the neighbourhood watch scheme. I do not say that that is one of the major reasons for an early by-election, however; I am coming to those.

One such factor is education. Glasgow, Central is an unusual constituency, in that it contains many schools and other prestigious educational institutions, including several institutions of further and higher education—for instance, Strathclyde university, the central college of commerce, the college of building and printing, the college of nautical studies, the college of food technology, the college of technology and Langside college. The students at the university and colleges mostly live in the constituency or just outside it, and a number of the university residences are in Clyde street.

This morning Scottish Members of Parliament—including, I hope, Tory Members—were lobbied by students who had come down from Scotland about, among other things, student loans. Student loans are an important issue for many Glasgow, Central electors. Those in favour of them should have a chance to go out on to the streets and into the student unions, and to knock on the doors of student residences to try to persuade students to support the Tory candidate, who supports loans. Those of us who disagree are entitled to argue in the opposite way and to have our views tested. The concentration of prestigious educational institutions in the area means that there is also a concentration of students and a good representation of student opinion which is not found in, for example, the next-door constituency of Govan.

Another important factor is the amount of development taking place in the area. The conversion of warehousing into housing, for instance, is a major issue, and I am told that the sheriff court is being converted into a fashion centre.

There is also a foreign policy issue which is important to the people of Glasgow as a whole and to the people of Glasgow, Central in particular—the naming of Nelson Mandela square. The name is a symbol of the affinity between the people of Glasgow and Nelson Mandela, who has been gaoled for over 25 years by the white racialist regime in South Africa. It is a bone of contention between the majority of citizens and the minority in the business community, who sometimes do not like receiving letters addressed to "Nelson Mandela square". That, however, will not decide all the voting in the by-election.

An issue that affects the business community in its central setting is the St. Enoch's development. When I was a boy, my father worked for British Rail as an engine driver, in the days of steam. For a while I too worked on the railway, as a young cleaner fireman, and one of my great ambitions was to travel between Ayr and St. Enoch's as the fireman on a passenger locomotive. That happened to me only once, but St. Enoch's station used to be a great landmark in central Glasgow.

The days of steam, of course, are gone; the railway system has been reallocated and reorganised, and St. Enoch's is now a new and major development. It has been described as the world's largest greenhouse: it will be 100 ft high and nearly 800 ft long—a marvellous sight. When people come to visit the city of culture they will be amazed and impressed by this development, which opens its doors to the public on 11 May. The development is funded by the Sears group and the Church Commissioners of the Church of England. That shows just how mobile capital can be. It cost £64·5 million to build. The development will house a number of major stores which have not had outlets in Scotland before. The immediate question must be, how can that be an issue in Glasgow, Central, when new stores will mean new jobs? It could not possibly be an issue, so there is no reason for citing it in evidence for an early by-election. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Shopkeepers at the new St. Enoch's development, the world's largest greenhouse, will be able to lease shops at £90 a square foot. However, it costs £140 per square foot to lease shops in Argyle street. That anomaly must be a major issue in the by-election. The new shopping development will have an effect on Argyle street, which is the main shopping street at the moment.

Only one or two units remain to be let in the St. Enoch's development. It is claimed that the development will create 2,500 jobs when it is fully operational. However, a big issue in the by-election will be whether those jobs shift from Argyle street to the new development or whether those jobs will be extra jobs. People will want to know what can be done about the problem facing people with shops in Argyle street who are paying £140 per square foot when there is cheaper, and in many cases better, accommodation elsewhere.

I will not weary you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with more quotes from the constituency profile. The Gear area of Glasgow touches the constituency of Glasgow, Central. That area has an important history and will no doubt be an issue in the by-election. The Gear area covers the east end of Glasgow, and renewal has made a big difference to the dereliction which used to exist there. Many nice houses have been built and there are many advanced factories. The main problem is that the number of jobs expected to be created as a result of that comprehensive attempt to solve some of the problems in that area have not materialised. That is bound to be a substantial issue in the by-election.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Before my hon. Friend leaves Argyle street, does he accept that the electors of Glasgow, Central will consider the report from the Confederation of British Industry which shows that Scottish businesses have an additional rates burden of around £250 million in comparison with their counterparts in England and Wales?

If hon. Members come to Glasgow, Central they will see the effects of that massive extra rates burden, which places an unfair burden on Scottish businesses. Regional businesses are burdened with extra rates bills, and that means closures and fewer jobs. Argyle street is a good example of a bad situation which causes great harm in Scottish cities like Glasgow. Businesses in Oxford street in London have lower rates bills than Princes street in Edinburgh. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that the electors of Glasgow, Central will believe that that is a major issue. They want to see jobs created and the widest possible variety of retail and other businesses in the constituency.

Mr. Sillars: I concur with everything that my hon. Friend has said. I would like the House to support me

[Mr. Sillars]

today, because I want to release my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East on to the streets of Glasgow, Central to campaign on the issues to which he has referred most eloquently. My hon. Friend's parents come from Glasgow. I do not believe that I will change scores of minds today. Hon. Members may not want my hon. Friend to campaign on the streets of Glasgow, Central at an early date. I can understand that, because my hon. Friend had a devastating effect on my election prospects in Glasgow, Govan. I owe him a great deal for the fact that I am in the House now.

I want to give just a glimpse of one or two important local issues and to refer to issues on which people need a Member of Parliament to go in and bat for them. On Friday 21 April 1989, the Glasgow *Evening Times* reported:

"Special passes hit by muddle. Government red tape is depriving Strathclyde's epilepsy sufferers of cut price travel passes."

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is listening to me. He is a nice man and I hope that he listens to me carefully. The paper continued:

"Thousands of epileptics in Glasgow and the west of Scotland are by law eligible for half-price rail and bus passes to travel round Glasgow and the west of Scotland, but they say that the Department of Transport is making it almost impossible to apply. They have told epileptics that Strathclyde passenger transport executive cannot accept a doctor's certificate as proof."

That is unbelievable.

The *Evening Times* is a very accurate paper. It continued:

"Instead, they must write to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre in Swansea and formally apply for a driver's licence even though they know that they will be refused."

They can qualify for a pass only when they are armed with a letter of refusal.

The Rev. David Laing, the convenor of Strathclyde regional council's social work committee, said:

"This is red tape for the sake of red tape."

That is the kind of thing that a Member of Parliament must attack. He said:

"The Government are hell bent on making it difficult for people to receive benefits to which they are legally entitled."

That is Mr. Laing's point of view and I am not entitled in this debate to pass comment on it. However, Mrs. Vivian Carely, the development officer for the Epilepsy Association of Scotland stated that that was a

"ridiculously cumbersome piece of Government legislation. The law has always said that anyone who has suffered an epilepsy attack within two years is not allowed to drive, and we accept that. However, what we cannot understand is why passengers submit this phoney driver's application, complete with a £17 cheque, which is then returned with a letter of refusal even though Swansea already know that they are not eligible to drive. There are around 12,500 epilepsy sufferers in Strathclyde, of whom about 6,500 are eligible for half price travel throughout the region."

That kind of nonsense should be tackled. Hon. Members are doing their best to deal with that matter. However, people in Glasgow, Central are in a catch-22. They cannot get a driver's licence and the doctor's certificate is not acceptable. That kind of local issue deserves an early resolution of the fact that that area needs a Member of Parliament now.

Maternity services will be another issue in the by-election. When I referred to Rotten Row earlier, I believe that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) laughed. That is understandable, and I will not take too much offence about that because it is a very strange name for a hospital, let alone a maternity hospital. However, Rotten Row is an ancient Glasgow name and the hospital is a worthy institution.

On 23 April this year "Scotland on Sunday" reported:

"Baby hospital faces closure in health review. The Queen Mother's hospital in Glasgow, which deals with more than 3,000 births a year, is facing closure following a health board review of maternity provision. Next month, Greater Glasgow Health Board's maternity and Paediatric management team will present the board with a report recommending a number of ways to streamline the maternity service, two of which are expected to spell the end for the Queen Mother's. The package of options designed to take the service into the 21st century will include a proposal to merge the 25-year-old hospital with Glasgow Royal Maternity, better known as Rotten Row, and Stobhill maternity unit. The three would then be relocated at a custom built unit at the Royal Infirmary site, which would deal with more than 10,000 births a year."

Many people in the constituency and staff in the hospitals will have views about that.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Maternity facilities are very important for constituents and hon. Members, as those who represent Grampian region are aware. A proposal like the one described by my hon. Friend was brought forward by the health board in my constituency. As a result of pressure from me, councillors and other groups working as a cohesive unit, the Scottish Office had to set up an investigation into the maternity facilities in my constituency. Yesterday, the Scottish Office published a very effective report which has taken account of the views and made clear recommendations for improvement to the Secretary of State for Scotland. It is clear that a Member of Parliament can play a vital role to ensure that the needs of his constituents are met, particularly with regard to maternity services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating not the hon. Lady's consitituency but the writ for Glasgow, Central.

Mr. Sillars: You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I can speak about Moray and Nairn. The point that my hon. Friend makes in principle is very sound, and I can dip into my own experience to prove how correct it is, and how important it is that the writ should be moved so that an election can be held and a Member of Parliament elected.

Between 1965 and 1970, before the last hospital reforms, I was a member of the Western regional hospital board. Among the earliest appointments made to that board was the convenor of the maternity services sub-committee. I had to deal with many letters to the official administration from Members of Parliament. There is no question but that when a Member of Parliament writes to a health authority requesting action or raising a point, his letter receives very special attention inside the whole administration. At the end of the day, the chain of responsibility ultimately ends with the Minister responsible.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask you to authorise the lowering of the blinds, because the sun is quite bright.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall certainly have that done.

Mr. Sillars: That was a very good point of order.

I refer next to the poll tax, but not to the poll tax in its whole immorality—although I should not say that, because I am not supposed to pass comment on it—but to the poll tax in its totality. I do not know whether you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were in the Chair when I spoke about the substantial number of privately rented houses in the Glasgow, Central constituency. I refer again to a report in the Glasgow *Evening Times*. One wonders what our city would do without that excellent and campaigning newspaper. On 13 April, it carried the banner headline:

"Tenants warned of rents rip-off."

It reported:

"Greedy landlords are cashing in on poll tax regulations. They are charging tenants the same rents as they paid when rates were part of the total rent.

The rent rip-off could be avoided, it was claimed today. Glasgow district deputy housing benefit manager Alan Sinclair said that all private tenants have the right to register their rent. By going to the rent registration officer, they could have the amount they pay fixed for three years at reasonable rate.

Mr. Sinclair said: 'We are advising all private sector tenants who come to us for help to do this. Landlords are going to make a killing out of the poll tax change. We don't have the power that English authorities do to send tenants to the registration officer. All we can do is advise. Although there are assured tenancies based on market rents. Anyone who moved in before January 2nd this year is still covered by the fair rent legislation. Glasgow district has a special private sector office in its housing benefit section at 11 George Street'."

The report goes on to comment that it is disgraceful and scandalous that people in the private rented sector are being ripped off by their landlords.

I know from my own experience in the city of Glasgow —as do other right hon. and hon. Members—that the public very often do not know their rights. We live in a very complex society and it is difficult for people to find their way around all the regulations that affect them.

In that respect, a Member of Parliament's surgery is very important. I pay tribute to the Labour Members representing constituencies adjoining Glasgow, Central. I read in *The Glaswegian* that a number of the late Bob McTaggart's colleagues have been holding surgeries in his area. I admire them for that and pay tribute to them for it. However, everyone knows that those hon. Members already carry a heavy surgery case load, and no one would pretend for a moment that the efforts of the hon. Members concerned are a substitute for a Member of Parliament who is plugged into the local community on a day-to-day basis and able to tackle issues such as fair rents.

I refer to another local issue that will cause a lot of trouble. If there is only one reason for holding the by-election at a very early date, it is that which I am about to describe to the House. *The Glaswegian* is a free sheet set up by Robert Maxwell. He is a member of the Labour party but *The Glaswegian* does not pretend to be a Labour party newspaper. It is delivered to every home in the area. The headline in its issue of 29 April was:

"A concrete jungle. Row over £2 million car park plan for the Green."

It reported:

"A £2 million plan to improve Glasgow Green has been slammed by local residents, and proposals to construct a £½ million car park on the historic and well-loved Green have been tagged a disgrace, with demands to district council to reject the idea."

The green is right in the middle of Glasgow, Central. Locals complain of lack of consultation, but their wishes are being ignored and there is to be a concrete jungle in place of Britain's oldest park. The newspaper report continues:

"Betty McAllister, chairman of the Community Council said: 'This is not on'."

We tend to speak very bluntly in Glasgow. That is something that English Members will find when they take their charter flight and land at Glasgow airport. When they arrive, they will find that the people there are very blunt speakers. There is no beating about the bush with Glasgow people.

The report states:

"Betty McAllister. . .said: 'This is not on. The consultants say that we won't see the cars because they will landscape the area with flower boxes. How on earth can you camouflage 150 cars?' she asks. *The Glaswegian* can exclusively reveal that the entrance to the car park will be at the Green Dyke entrance to the Green, with access through Monteith Road. The council hope to begin construction by July,"—

that is why it is so important to elect a new Member of Parliament soon——

"with the work being completed for the City of Culture 1990."

That is a real-life issue and one that must be resolved. It is one in which the constituency's Member of Parliament must be involved. The East End management committee also want to block that plan:

"Ken Hamilton the deputy manager of the committee, said: 'We are geared towards promoting the east end of the city, and I can't see how having a large expanse of concrete in the middle of the Green can help our cause.' Councillor Crawford, convenor of the council's Parks Committee, said: 'The alternatives put to us regarding the problem of parking in this area of the city are not feasible. The plans for the future of Glasgow Green are still in the planning stages and the people who have objections to them will have the chance to make their objections known'."

However, the plan is to start work in July.

Glasgow Green is an historical area in the Glasgow, Central constituency that has incredible connotations for the Scottish working class movement. I remember the great demonstrations that were held there in 1971 against the Heath Government's Industrial Relations Bill. I remember 15,000 Transport and General Workers Union members, together with members of the Boilermakers' Union and of other unions, marching through the centre of Glasgow. Glasgow Green is a traditional place of assembly. They marched to Glasgow Green to be addressed by Alex Ferry of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers; Jimmy Jack of the Scottish Trades Union Congress; a previous Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Central, wee Tommy Macmillan, who was a National Union of Railwaymen member; and myself.

I make the point that it is not just a matter of a few cars being parked on green grass. Glasgow Green belongs to the people. It is part of our tradition and history. It is critical that there is a Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Central who can take on that issue and fight to ensure that the matter is resolved. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West knows that very well.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Hon. Friend? I was born in Govan.

Mr. Sillars: I am sure that my hon. Friend has himself taken part in demonstrations at Glasgow Green. However, we all understand that my hon. Friend has problems intervening.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: My hon. Friend clearly describes the concern of the electors of Glasgow, Central about their environment. Perhaps he will explain to English Members

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

—although there are very few in the Chamber—that Glasgow is known as the "dear, green place." That being so, that historical part of Glasgow's environment will surely play a great part in any election campaign. As my hon. Friend rightly says, Glasgow people care deeply about the history of Glagow Green which is very much part of the city's folk culture as well as of the environment. That "dear, green place" must remain an asset, despite the city's industrial development. Glasgow's environment must be well to the fore in the minds of the electorate of Glasgow, Central.

Mr. Sillars: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It would do English Conservative Members who come up to Scotland canvassing, such as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), the world of good to come up against our working-class cultures and traditions. Glasgow is a great city which has produced many great people.

Sunday shopping is an important local issue. Glasgow, Central constituency contains many small shops which are owned and operated by the Pakistani community which makes a significant contribution to the area. The *Glasgow Herald* on Friday 28 April claimed that Sunday shopping is eroding family life. That is some claim. The article went on:

"Sunday trading in Scotland is on the increase, leading to further erosion of family life, the exploitation of shopworkers and increased pressure on small traders, it was claimed yesterday. The criticisms of Sabbath shopping expeditions came at a news conference in Glasgow yesterday called the 'Keep Sunday Special Campaign, Scotland' to launch a booklet which claims that more than two thirds of Scots see no need for the shops to open on Sunday other than what we have at the present time."

That is quite an important issue because Glasgow, Central contains all the large stores and the St. Enoch's development, which I have mentioned, and Sunday trading would transform the lives of citizens in Glasgow, Central. Many people in that constituency live near the major shopping centres, so from Monday to Saturday life can be pretty rough in that there are many people and many cars and much hassle is attached to living there, so Sunday is a very relaxing day when people can enjoy the beauty of the city. If Sunday became like any other weekday it would have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of the electorate in Glasgow, Central.

A further issue requires the attention of a Member of Parliament. Robert Maxwell's paper, *The Glaswegian*, the paper for the people of Greater Glasgow, for the week ending Saturday 22 April 1989, stated:

"Gas Under Glasgow. Oilmen set to sink wells. Exclusive story."

That possibility has implications for Glasgow's economy and the folk in Glasgow, Central. I shall read out just a wee bit, not the whole story, unless the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) would like me to read it all. The article states that an international oil company is to spend more than £1 million drilling for natural gas 1,000 metres under the streets of Glasgow. London-based Marinex Petroleum will sink a well near Bargeddie in the city's east end later this year. But this week a top engineer with the company said that the gas pocket they hoped to find ran under the city centre. That is a major issue, if it is true.

In the centre of Glasgow, in the middle of the constituency, there is some of the most beautiful architecture and architectural layout one could imagine. I am not boasting simply because I represent part of the city of Glasgow. Everyone in Scotland is very proud of our architectural heritage. George square, the city buildings and the City Chambers are among the most beautiful buildings that anyone can imagine. Glasgow is full of classical buildings, and people are talking about gas underneath the city. Do they want to put gas belts in George square and Clyde street? The possibility has to be examined extremely closely and very carefully. It would be vandalism.

In addition, a new prestige building is being built in Glasgow, Central. We need an early writ and an early by-election because Glasgow district council is building a new concert hall. I shall tell the House a wee story that is relevant to why the writ should be moved. Glasgow district council is very proud of the fact that Glasgow is to be the European city of culture in 1990, but what if the city of culture of Europe in 1990 did not have a major concert hall? That could be an enormous problem. How could the city of culture lack such prestige? I pay respect to the Labour group which controls the city. It met and decided that Glasgow could not be the European city of culture unless it had a modern concert hall. It is being constructed just north of Queen street station. What will happen if in the middle of building the concert hall someone discovers gas underneath it? There will be an argument about the mineral rights. Such matters require the attention of a Member of Parliament who can raise them with the Scottish Office Ministers and try to resolve the major economic benefits, if they exist, without damaging the cultural centre of our city. That is why we badly need a by-election.

I have mentioned Scottish housing. Scottish Homes has been operating since 1 April, so no one really knows the score. I have mentioned housing associations, but one of the great problems of the new housing legislation is that housing associations receive smaller grants, as a means of attracting private money into housing, and that will affect rents. The private sector also creates major problems as 20,000 houses are below tolerable standards.

Another city-wide matter is of important local concern. One of the reasons why I wish to persuade the House to accept the writ and have an early by-election which would bring focus to bear on Glasgow, Central ouside the European arena is Mayfest. It is not so much a local issue as a local delight. It is city-wide, but the central part of Glasgow in which the constituency lies plays a major part in providing the necessary facilities for that cultural feast in Glasgow. I should like to persuade hon. Members of the need to focus on Glasgow because the by-election will attract many visiting journalists, not only those from south of the border who come up occasionally to find out what the natives are doing, but a much wider media because of what happened in Govan and elsewhere. People will come from France and Germany. Only this morning I received a telephone call from Finland where people are interested in what is happening politically in Scotland.

Irrespective of political differences, we are trying to raise the international prestige of Glasgow and make it internationally attractive so that people will come to live there and invest there, so that we can build up the social and economic infrastructure and create manufacturing and new service industries. There will be important

economic benefits for the community of central Glasgow if there is wider knowledge of the city's regeneration, its new vitality and the incredible pride running through the city. I should like Glasgow to attract people from abroad as well as those from south of the border so that they can talk to ordinary Glaswegians in Glasgow, Central, where taxi drivers say how proud they are of the city and ordinary men and women, despite their housing problems, say that the city is on the move and how proud they are of it. If we bring those folk to Glasgow we can dispel the old myths about the city, and about our quality and worth that still pertain in some parts of the world.

I shall give hon. Members an example of what the Mayfest involves. *The Glaswegian* said of the Mayfest:

"This is what it is all about. It just keeps growing. The spectacular Glasgow Mayfest begins again next week and it is brighter, bigger and more vibrant than before. The festival started six years ago when a group of trade union officials, Wildcat theatre members and members of Equity decided to extend the traditional May Day celebrations. This year is the biggest Mayfest ever. There is sponsorship of over £700,000, with money coming from district and regional councils, the Scottish Arts Councils, the visiting arts organisations and Scottish and Newcastle brewers."

We are pleased that Scottish and Newcastle Breweries was saved from a take-over by Elders.

The article continues:

"More than 200,000 people are expected to attend over 100 venues to see more than 200 companies or individuals. Glasgow can only reap the financial benefits. Hotels, bars and shops will be flooded with tourists from other cities and other countries, all anxious to spend their money in Glasgow. Jackie Westbrook, organiser of the event summed it all up. 'The people of Glasgow take Mayfest to their hearts and treat it with wonderful affection.' That may sound over the top, but it is true and it is great."

We would like people to see "Borderlines, Glasvegas". It writer, Morag Fullerton, said:

"It captures the humour, spirit and character of Glasgow."

We want to attract people to Glasgow so that they can see the quality, spirit and character of Glaswegians. Once the visiting media people have attended their press conferences and made their reports they will want to go to the pubs, clubs and bars. A number of arty-crafty people will want to go——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. For some time, the hon. Gentleman has been talking about Glasgow as a whole. I want to hear more about the writ for Glasgow, Central by-election.

Mr. Sillars: That is true. It is my fault, because I have not explained clearly that Glasgow, Central is at the heart of the Mayfest.

I have an article that says:

"You will not get more Glaswegians shown "Borderlines, Glasvegas". They take the song 'Looking for Linda' and rename it 'Searching for senga.'"

That sums up the irreverent Glaswegian attitude to life, which makes Glasgow and its people extremely attractive.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: My hon. Friend is considering in detail the constituency's problems and why it is important to have an early by-election. He has mentioned ecology, housing and other important topics that the electors will want to discuss in detail, but amazingly, he has not mentioned a subject that is of interest to the electors. He must surely recognise that football is important to the electors of Glasgow, Central, given the success of our national team. I am sure that the electors will want to discuss the team's future prospects against Norway and Yugoslavia. As the Government are about to introduce identity cards in England and, we hope, not in Scotland, I am sure that this will be a hot issue on the doorsteps of Glasgow, Central. Is there a football club—I suspect that there is—within the constituency? I am sure that football spectators, who are also electors, regard football as an issue important to a by-election.

Mr. Sillars: The national stadium of Hampden park lies just outside the constituency's boundaries. That will be of relief to the Chair, never mind anyone else. There is no doubt that many people in Glasgow, Central are fanatical football supporters, like most Scottish people. We shall be queueing up to see our team qualify, for the fifth time running, for the World Cup in Italy. It would be wrong for me to try to shift Hampden park over the constituency boundary line just for the sake of argument.

National issues will be as important as local issues in the by-election. Rarely can electors in one constituency have had so many crucial national issues to consider. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were not in the Chair at the time, but I reminded Mr. Speaker that earlier this year he pointed out that this is the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and added, long may it remain so. Whatever the political differences we may have, I accept that this is the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Although I was not in the Chair at the time, I was listening, so there is no need for the hon. Gentleman to repeat that argument.

Mr. Sillars: I was not about to repeat that argument, but I am happy that I do not need to elaborate on it. I am especially pleased that it registered first time, given the confusion that I have caused once or twice.

The views of the electors are vital and must be known as soon as possible. Once I have set out the issues—I do not intend this arrogantly—I will have convinced even the most sceptical Tory Member that the writ should be moved and that we should have an early by-election.

It is not for me to comment on Government policy, but it is bound to play a large part in the by-election. The Budget, which unfortunately I was unable to hear for a variety of reasons, will be a big issue. On the day after the Budget, *The Times*—not the *Evening Times*; hon. Members from Glasgow tend to talk of the *Evening Times* as *The Times*—said:

"Battle against inflation fuels hope of future tax cuts. Cautious but clever Lawson."

It will be interesting to see whether that is the judgment of the people of Glasgow, Central.

People who think that it was a cautious but clever Budget should have an early opportunity to test opinion in Scotland. As the National Health Service is the main issue in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election, perhaps opinion on the Budget will not be tested. I should not be surprised to see Ministers on television tomorrow night or on Friday morning explaining that it was a one-issue campaign and that folk did not understand. If that is so, the Government should allow the people of Glasgow, Central the opportunity of a major debate on the Budget, which is central to our economic policy.

A very good letter appeared in the *Financial Times* from a member of the Labour party. Leaving aside the training figures and the weakness of manufacturing industry, many people are concerned about manufacturing and believe that we cannot take in each other's washing. This Labour Member should be let loose on the streets of Glasgow so

[Mr. Sillars]

that he can have debates with Tory Members. I tell the Leader of the House that this campaign will be fought on the streets. We expect debates to be held not only in halls but on street corners. The people can argue with the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) about the weakness or strength of our manufacturing industry.

Like everyone else, a number of folk in Glasgow, Central have borrowed. I have heard them described as yuppies in the Merchant city—I object to that. I am a resident of the Merchant city and am not a yuppie, certainly not at 51. My neighbours across the landing from me are not yuppies either; they are ordinary folk who have bought flats using a mortgage. On 9 March, *The Times* —the London *Times*—stated:

"Mr. Robin Leigh-Pemberton, Governor of the Bank of England, has warned that the number of personal borrowers defaulting on their debts is likely to rise this year as higher interest rates take their toll . . . The Governor said that between 1976 and 1978, personal borrowing had risen sevenfold, while the ratio of debt to personal income had grown from 50 per cent to more than 100 per cent."

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West is a trained economist. I look forward to slipping into the back of the halls to listen to him deal with the monetarist aspects of this policy. We are told that borrowing has risen sevenfold during those years under a monetarist Government.

Central to the political debate in the British political system is the question whether a monetarist policy operates—where did it begin, does it still operate, has it stopped and, if so, what operates in its place? Those are major issues which will excite a number of Conservative Members, those ideologues, six of whom the Leader of the House put on the Committee dealing with the so-called Self-Governing (Scotland) Bill.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: It is the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill. Unfortunately, it is not the Self-Governing (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Sillars: That day will come.

We want those folk to go before and be interrogated by the electors of Glasgow, Central. I hope that the English Tory Members who come up to Glasgow on their charter planes make no mistake: they should not think the folk in the constituency do not know about monetary policy. When Tory Members enter the city of Glasgow, particularly Glasgow, Central, they will meet a well-educated political electorate. In some respects, I am sorry for Conservative Members, because they will be subjected at their public meetings to severe interrogation at a theoretical level on monetarism, added value and the mode and means of production.

This will be an interesting election for the Government. One of the benefits of holding an early election and focusing on this issue separately from the European elections will be that it will educate the Government, who think that they are the only ideologues. There are a fair number of ideologues in Glasgow, Central. I have heard them at my public meetings, and they subject people to telling scrutiny.

Property is another item of the national economy that is relevant to the issue of the writ. About 35 per cent. of people in Glasgow, Central are owner-occupiers. *The Daily Telegraph* is a Tory newspaper and, although it does not sell much in that constituency, one of the things that I like about it is that it distinguishes between its news coverage and its editorial policy. It is one of those newspapers that most politicians use as a resource. *[Interruption.]* Does my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West want to intervene? No? We all understand his difficulty.

On 14 March this year, *The Daily Telegraph*, under the headline

"Property seen as safe refuge",

stated:

"Nothing the Chancellor of the Exchequer does or says today is likely to divert the big money from property, believes Bob Bowden, Conrad Ritblat's investment partner."

The article quoted Mr. Bowden as saying:

"It may be premature to talk of a return to the situation in the late 70s when the average institutional holding in property was as high as 19 per cent. but already, after a spell in the doldrums—down to 8 per cent. in 1986—the percentage is edging into double figures.

It does not take too much imagination to visualise a scenario where the funds will take refuge in property for anything up to 15-18 per cent. of their investment cash reserves.

Certainly, they are still good buying opportunities, particularly in the strong market sectors such as offices and industrial. Strong rental and capital growth is under-pinned by demand and there is currently a high level of investment cash from overseas to bolster this sector."

That pressure on industrial and commercial property is bound to have an effect on property overall, but in Glasgow, Central, commercial and industrial property forms a big part of the capital. That issue will be important.

The other day, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) made a remarkable speech.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): He always does.

Mr. Sillars: Yes, he is very good: there is no question about that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech was reported on 2 May in the *Glasgow Herald*. This is an important reason for ensuring that the focus on Glasgow, Central is separate from the European election. The *Glasgow Herald* stated:

"Smith scorns the locust years".

The article continued:

"Shadow Chancellor Mr. John Smith yesterday described the 1980s as the locust years as he delivered a withering attack on the Government's economic performance."

We can imagine that happening in the halls in the middle of Glasgow, Central.

The article continued:

"He told a media rally at the Barbican in London, 'The seed corn has been squandered by Mrs. Thatcher in her spend now, pay later society.' It was one of Labour's most savage onslaughts so far on 'the 10 years of hype, with the economy in retreat and with even the Tory media merchants unable to persuade to the contrary'. Mr. Smith said, 'At the end of 10 years, Britain has the highest balance of payments deficit in our history, the highest inflation rate of the major countries in the European Community and the highest interest rates in the industrial world. Despite the huge bonus of North sea oil revenues, worth a total of £78 billion, we are in deep economic trouble.'"

Of course, oil revenues will be one of the big issues in the Glasgow, Central by-election in relation to the national economy and Scotland. I am sure that members of the Scottish National party will be delighted to learn that, far from decrying their importance, a major figure in

the Labour party is inflating them to their proper position in the economic equation. It is important that that is known to the electors of Glasgow, Central.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: My hon. Friend will recall that today at Scottish Questions, reference was made to oil revenues. It is worth reminding the voters of Glasgow, Central and of all Scotland that the oil revenues have been worth £78 billion over the past decade and little benefit has been received in Scotland. It is time that that money was reinvested in various parts of Scotland, especially inner-city areas such as Glasgow, Central, where there is a desperate need for improvements in housing, health, education and many other aspects which my hon. Friend has mentioned.

Mr. Sillars: One of my great problems this afternoon is that I cannot be partisan. Because I am moving the writ within the boundaries set by "Erskine May", Standing Orders and the traditions of the House, I cannot say what I would like to say about the oil revenues that have flowed through our economy.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have heard the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) say just now that he was moving the writ for the Glasgow, Central by-election. He has said that repeatedly during the past couple of hours. I think that this is an appropriate point for me to direct your attention to a piece of paper that has been circulating throughout the Palace, which is directly relevant to this debate and to you. It comes from the "Scottish National Party Parliamentary Group" and is headed

"Sillars' Filibuster Against Schools Bill Guillotine".

It says:

"SNP Vice-President Mr. Jim Sillars, MP for Govan, explained that his filibuster in the House of Commons this afternoon . . . was intended as a procedural device to slow up the Government guillotine on the Schools' opting-out Bill"

and that it was not his intention to move the writ.

Those of us who have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has been saying have found it difficult to distinguish his argument for the early moving of the writ. Our confusion and concern are the greater because the press release says:

"Mr. Sillars said that he chose this device, not because he intended to move the writ for Glasgow, Central By-Election but 'to demonstrate how Scottish Opposition MPs can harass the Tories and attack Thatcher's legislative plans'."

The hon. Gentleman has just told you, Mr. Speaker, something that is simply out of line with the document that has been circulated to the press, which suggests that journalists "contact Jim Sillars" on extension 5022.

The hon. Gentleman has taken some time in telling the House that he is moving the writ for the by-election, but it seems that he is not moving it. He has told the outside world that he is not arguing about the principle of the timing of the Glasgow, Central by-election or the manipulation by the parties of by-election dates, of which he made great play earlier. This is quite simply a sordid attempt to get into the headlines tomorrow and to try to postpone the guillotine motion to be debated tonight, not into the indefinite future, but until 10 o'clock. That means that the motion will be debated between the hours of 10 o'clock tonight and 1 o'clock tomorrow morning and that the vote on this disgraceful measure will be moved from a time at which the Bill would have appeared in all its sordid glory to a time in the middle of the night, when it will be hidden from the large majority of the Scottish population.

Under Standing Order No. 41, it is within your power, Mr. Speaker, to rule out of order

"a Member . . . who persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition, either of his own argument or of the arguments used by other Members".

On the basis of the evidence in black and white that I have produced, I contend that the hon. Member for Govan is involved in an exercise that has nothing to do with what he has claimed and that he should be ruled out of order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to ask the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) a straight question. Is it true that he does not intend to move the motion?

Mr. Sillars: That will depend upon the debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is a long-established principle in the House that hon. Members who speak to a motion must intend to move it.

Mr. Sillars: I have moved the writ, Mr. Speaker; I began my remarks with the words "I beg to move".

Before continuing with my substantive argument, let me point out that I can be judged in the House only on the basis of what I say in the House. It is a dangerous course for an hon. Member on either side of the House to interject something from outside.

As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, I have not wandered out of order one iota since I started my remarks.

Mr. Speaker: That was true while I was in the Chair earlier, and I understand from Mr. Deputy Speaker, who has also been in the Chair, that the hon. Member has been in order. But it is a different matter now that I have seen a press release which alleges that this is a filibuster. That puts a different complexion on the matter, and I must ask the hon. Gentleman again, now that he claims that he has moved the motion, whether he intends to persist with it.

Mr. Sillars: Well, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Answer the straight question.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman must give me the opportunity to answer as I wish.

If I were filibustering in the technical parliamentary sense of the word, you, Mr. Speaker, could rule me out of order, but we all know that the term "filibuster" has a wide meaning outside the House. Everyone knows full well that in this place technical issues are resolved in a technical manner and that technical language is used of them. "Filibuster" is one. Technically, I have not filibustered for one minute, although the man outside probably thinks that I have. In broad colloquial language—[HON. MEMBERS: "The press release?"] But there is a difference. I know that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) wants to collude with the Tory party to get the guillotine motion through; it would not be the first time that a Labour Front Bench spokesman had colluded with the Tories. On the technical issue, however, and according to the language used in this place, Mr. Speaker, I cannot be faulted, and you know that.

Mr. Speaker: If the press release is a genuine press release put out by the hon. Gentleman, it puts a very different complexion on what he seeks to do in relation to the abuse of our procedures.

Mr. Bermingham: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I understand the argument correctly, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) has said, in answer to your question, that this is not a filibuster. I asked him to give a straight answer to your question, which he failed to do. He was not prepared to admit that he was not responsible for the last paragraph of the press release, which says clearly that he does not propose to move the writ.

It must be an abuse of the process of the House for an hon. Member to say one thing in the House having already said something utterly different outside—in advance, and in a press release that carries his telephone number.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should answer two straight questions: first, is he responsible for the press release; secondly, is he responsible for its last paragraph? If he is responsible for both, this must surely be an abuse of our procedures.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member for Govan answer those two questions?

Mr. Sillars: Could you repeat them, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman responsible for the last paragraph of the press release and is he responsible for issuing the press release?

Mr. Sillars: Of course I take responsibility for it. [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] There is no way that I would shed responsibility on to someone else.

We are in the process of debating the writ. If you, Mr. Speaker, cast your mind back to the Richmond, Yorks by-election writ, you will recall what the hon. Member for Bolsover said. We all know what the objective was during the moving of the writ that Friday. [Hon. Members: "Do we?"] Yes, and we all read about it in the press three or four days before it happened.

Mr. Brian Sedgemoore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): He put on a better act than you.

Mr. Sillars: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am now being told that an act——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman well knows that in moving this motion, it must be his intention to persist with it. I am concerned that he said in the press release for which he says he takes responsibility that he does not intend to move the writ for the Glasgow, Central by-election. I must now ask him the question directly: does he so intend?

Mr. Sillars: Yes, Sir. I have moved it, but whether it goes to a vote is a different matter—[Hon. Members: "Oh!"] You know as well as I do, Mr. Speaker, that on the second occasion on which the Richmond, Yorks writ was moved, a certain procedural device was used—that the Question be, "That the Question be not now put". I am sure that I do not need to point this out to you, Mr. Speaker. The question whether the matter goes to a vote does not lie entirely in my hands. You know that as well as anyone. If you are asking me whether I am moving the writ, the answer is yes, I am moving the writ.

Mr. Speaker: In that case the hon. Gentleman may proceed, but he must proceed absolutely in order.

Mr. Sillars: May I ask whether you are suggesting that I have not been in order?

Mr. Speaker: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that he has been in order. I am saying that now that I have this press release in my hand I am bound to take a slightly different view of what he has been saying.

Mr. Sillars: I find that difficult to follow in logic. If I have been in order, there can be no complaint about my performance in the House, irrespective of what is or is not said outside. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that this is not my first visitation to this place. As I said earlier, I was brought up in the Bob Mellish Whips Office. I know what goes on behind the Chair. You are not talking to somebody who is naive. *[Interruption.]* One of the most remarkable events of the past two seconds has been the "Oohs" and "Aahs" from adult people pretending that what goes on behind the Chair and through the usual channels is Boy Scout stuff.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What matters now is what goes on between the hon. Gentleman and the Chair.

Mr. Sillars: Point taken, Mr. Speaker.

I now refer to another aspect of national policy.

Mr. Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman wants to speak again and collude with the Tories.

Mr. Robertson: I am sure that you will resent that remark as much as I do, Mr. Speaker. The House of Commons should be protected from a group of people. The press release is in the name of a group of people and is a deceit either to the press or to the House. The hon. Gentleman has produced a press release in his own name, in his own words and with quotation marks. It clearly states:

"Sillars' filibuster against schools Bill guillotine."

Standing Order No. 42 provides that the Chair should protect the House against irrelevance. I agree that that is a fine point, but the hon. Gentleman has issued a press release and told the press that this is a filibuster and is intended as a procedural device to delay the Government's guillotine on the schools opting-out Bill. He knew that the procedures of the House could not delay the Bill beyond 10 o'clock tonight. He went on to say that he chose that device not because he intended to move the writ for the Glasgow, Central by-election. Clearly he is in breach of Standing Order No. 42, because what he says is irrelevant.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) knows that there are precedents for what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) is doing. He has already told me that he intends to move the motion, and he must proceed in order.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you had had at the inception of the debate the information which you have in your hand, would you have called the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. I did not have it in my hand earlier, but I have it now.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The point of order that was raised by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) was less a point of order than a point of debate. My hon. Friend has moved the writ. Everything that he has said so far is relevant. Surely that is what we should be concerned about.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is the judge of whether a point of order is legitimate. In the light of what has been handed to me, it was a perfectly legitimate point of order to raise with me. The hon. Member for Govan must now remain absolutely in order and continue to move the writ for the Glasgow, Central by-election.

Mr. Sillars: There is no problem, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, national issues demand that we enable the electors of Glasgow, Central at an early stage to decide what sort of Member of Parliament they want to represent their views in the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am having great difficulty in hearing my hon. Friend because of the noise which is being made by hon. Members who have been present for only about two minutes.

Mr. Speaker: It is up to the hon. Member for Govan to obtain the ear of the House. He must keep in order.

Mr. Sillars: Fine, Mr. Speaker. You and I both know that I am not doing anything which other folk have not done before.

One of the big issues that requires an early election is the electricity sell-off in Scotland. One of the strange reports in *The Independent* of 27 April is headed:

"Few prepared to buy shares in electricity"

It states:

"Most people are not interested in investing in the privatised electricity industry but 50 per cent. are willing to pay for a cleaner environment, according to a Gallup poll."

Given that that is a fact, there is a major persuasion job to be done on the electors of Glasgow, Central by the Conservative Government. If half the folk do not want the electricity privatisation measure, it is important that the Government put it to an early electoral test in Glasgow, Central and come to some conclusions based upon the ballot box. A major part of the Conservative party's election manifesto for the Glasgow, Central by-election will be devoted to the privatisation of electricity. It is a wonderful chance for ideologues in the Conservative party to go north again, charter a craft and land at the airport, and knock on the doors to persuade people to buy shares in privatised electricity. It will be important for them to listen to the response of ordinary folk in Glasgow, Central. That is one of the major national issues that demand an early by-election.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Why is it that members of the Scottish National party refused to sit on the Standing Committee and did not oppose the Electricity Bill as other Opposition parties did?

Mr. Sillars: I am in the same difficulty with the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) as I was with one of my hon. Friends who invited me to give partisan political opinions, Mr. Speaker, which you and I both know would put me out of order and subject me to another intervention from the hon. Member for Hamilton. It illustrates a point. Such an issue should be debated at an early stage. I expect the hon. Gentleman to be on a plane —it will be different from the other one—to Glasgow, Central to ask our candidate that very question.

Mr. Speaker: I agree with the hon. Member. This is a debate. I hope that he will bear in mind that other hon. Members wish to participate in it. He has been speaking for a very long time. He must have regard to the wishes of other hon. Members to participate. Will he bear that in mind?

Mr. Sillars: One thing you must admit about me, Mr. Speaker, is that I do not take up a lot of time in the House. I do not apologise for that. If I explain it to you, I will be out of order. Of course I understand the position. You and I know that you know that I know that you know the position. We all know the position. There is no problem attached to that.

Another reason why it is absolutely critical to have an early test of opinion on a national issue is the National Health Service. I will not go out of order by quoting and naming all the hospitals in Glasgow, Central. There are many of them. The National Health Service will figure prominently in the Glasgow, Central by-election, and so it should.

I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State will be a day-to-day visitor, but the folk in Glasgow, Central want to see his big brother, the Secretary of State for Health. As you have said, Mr. Speaker, this is the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Scottish doctors have been equally scandalised by the jibe about being concerned only about their wallets. It is important that at an early stage, while the Government are formulating legislation arising out of discussions and consultation about the White Paper, they test opinion in Scotland. At the moment, no Member of this Parliament has been able to elicit from the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland responsible for health matters in Scotland whether there will be separate legislation for Scotland on the National Health Service, although there has always been separate legislation before.

Mr. Speaker: I think that what the hon. Gentleman is saying is not entirely relevant to whether the writ should be moved now.

Mr. Sillars: The point is that, if the writ is moved now and there is an early election, there is no doubt that, at meeting after meeting that the Under-Secretary attends with experts in the Health Service—nurses, doctors and ancillary workers—he will be asked time after time the important question whether Scotland will have separate legislation, since it affects people throughout the area. That is why it is important to have an early election so that the hon. Gentleman can subject himself and his ideas to the people in the constituency.

I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, were in the Chair yesterday to hear the debate—*[Interruption.]* No, the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) is wrong; I was here yesterday. *[Interruption.]* Mr. Speaker, I must ask for your protection; I am being subjected to harassment. I do not normally mind, but I cannot keep in order and answer all these sedentary interventions as well.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will get my protection; but the House should also have its protection.

Mr. Sillars: I hope that the folk in Scotland will have protection, that is what my speech is partly about. One reason why there must be an early by-election is the constitutional crisis that is now part and parcel of the political system inside Scotland, and, I am told, in England and Wales as well.

Before I deal with that, I will turn to another important issue—the green issue. I hope to persuade you, Mr.

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Speaker, that this matter is highly relevant; people should have an early opportunity to decide in an election green issues. A headline in *The Times* of 8 March this year reads:

"Thatcher attack on rain forests."

The headline is misleading. When I first read it, I thought the Prime Minister had picked up her axe, said "now look here" to the trees, and then attacked them. However, that is not the case. The article states:

"Mrs. Thatcher moved from the closing of the successful Saving the Ozone Layer conference in London yesterday to address the much broader question of global climate change, and in particular the part played in that change by the destruction of Brazil's tropical rain forests."

There are comments about this matter attributed by the local press to the people in Glasgow, Central. They were asked about the so-called scientific report that the greenhouse effect would raise the level of the oceans, which would inundate parts of the world, including the United Kingdom. The island of Great Britain, including Glasgow, was to be affected and Glasgow, Central, it was said, would probably disappear. That shows the importance of the green issues in politics at the moment. That matter should be divorced from the occasion of 15 June when the European elections are held in an arena of their own.

The Prime Minister's new policy must be subjected to a very early test by the people of Scotland. A whole range of other issues are related to the green issue. There are fall-outs between Ministers. The Prince of Wales has his own point of view on the environment. I live in Glasgow and am an elector in Glasgow, Central, and I listen to what folk in the area say. They were interested in what the Prince of Wales said about the environment when he addressed a major conference on the matter. Of course, there is no way in which the Prince of Wales can become involved in the by-election for Glasgow, Central. I mention this matter only to show how the folk of Glasgow, Central are tuned in to the green issues. They have picked up the fact that the heir to the throne is deeply involved in and concerned about those matters.

The Prime Minister is now a grandmother, and the folk in Glasgow, Central would like the opportunity of congratulating her and of asking her questions about environmental effects on their grandchildren as well as her grandchildren. That is another reason for moving the writ and giving the people of Glasgow, Central the opportunity to question the Leader of the House on the Government's new green tinge to the Tory blue. I am pleased to see the right hon. Gentleman nodding. I think I have carried him on this question. Perhaps I can carry him with me on the question of moving the writ. I have carried him part of the way, but at the end of the day it is not up to me whether the writ is voted on; that rests with the House.

Other environmental issues are important. I wish to refer to a report in a Scottish newspaper that is relevant to the people in Glasgow, Central. The following headline appeared in the Scotland section of *The Sunday Times* on 12 March this year:

"UK dustbin fear as waste crisis looms."

I hope that the Leader of the House is listening, because one of the bones of contention between Members of my party and Government Members has been the failure to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. That matter even now is being debated as part of the political process in the Glasgow, Central by-election. The motion that the Leader of the House tabled said that other Select Committees would consider Scottish affairs. The *Sunday Times* report states:

"Scotland could become a dumping ground for the whole of Britain if tough new safeguards and waste disposal proposals for England and Wales are not adopted here."

Long may it be that wherever one lives in the United Kingdom the same laws apply. The article continues:

"Pollution controls north of the border have been described as a shambles and the problem has been made worse by the closure of Scotland's largest waste tip near Coatbridge in Lanarkshire which handles 300,000 tonnes of waste a year."

The report goes on to say that David Boyd, the industrial director of the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors, warned that, unless the Government took immediate action, disaster was looming. A person called J. M. Bright wants the Scottish Office to adopt the recommendations included in the report on toxic waste published last Wednesday by the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment chaired by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). The article states:

"Rossi recommended far-reaching changes for England and Wales including a beefed-up inspectorate and a radical reorganisation of the system of dump licensing. 'It will be much, much tougher if our recommendations are adopted, and the Government seems to be taking our report very seriously', said Rossi."

The folk of Glasgow, Central, listening to the hon. Gentleman, would think that the Environment Committee should be looking after Scottish interests.

The article continues:

"The report was severely critical of the Department of the Environment and the local authorities. No evidence was taken from Scotland. Rossi explained, 'Scotland is a foreign country as far as our recommendations are concerned. It is up to the Secretary of State what action he takes on the environment.'"

The Government told the people of Scotland that there would be a Select Committee system and that, although they could not set up a Scottish Select Committee, they assured us that Scotland's interests would be looked after. However, one of the major Select Committees dealing with one of the major issues affecting our part of the country as much as anywhere else has said that it regards us as a foreign country.

Many academic institutions dealing with environmental problems are situated in Glasgow, Central. We have experts who know about the subject and who are electors there. They will want an early opportunity to cross-examine the Leader of the House. I hope that he will assure me that he will come up to Glasgow, Central because it is important that there is such an opportunity at an early date.

The poll tax is another important issue and, although I shall not go into its merits or otherwise, I advise the House that a major concern in Glasgow, Central is whether warrant sales will operate against poor people. It is important that that matter is examined carefully and closely in the arena of an election that matters and that people have an opportunity to make a decision that matters. There are basically three ways in which non-payment of the poll tax could be enforced. The first is wage arrestment, the second is bank arrestment and the third is warrant sales. I know what I am talking about because I have gone into this matter extensively in Glasgow, Central. As many people in that constituency do not have a wage or a bank account and perhaps own only

half of what is in their house, whether or not Strathclyde region will implement warrant sales has become a major issue.

I am happy to report that I have received a letter from Charlie Gray, the leader of the Strathclyde Regional Labour Group, with whom I am friendly enough personally, although we differ politically and we accept the cut and thrust as one must do. Although the letter is not the friendliest that I have ever received——

Mr. Speaker: What is the relevance of the letter to the hon. Gentleman to the by-election?

Mr. Sillars: I will tell you the relevance, Mr. Speaker. I wrote to Charlie Gray as a Member of Parliament for a Glasgow constituency, which has exactly the same problems as the Glasgow, Central constituency, which is next door. I am sure that the constituencies of other hon. Members have the same problems. The regional council is the levying authority, and it is the representations that we as Members of Parliament make to the regional council and the pressure that we bring to bear on it on behalf of the community that will determine whether people who do not pay the poll tax are chased up through bank arrestment, wage arrestment or warrant sales.

Another reason why the letter is relevant is that the Tories will want to contest what Charlie Gray has said. It is a bone of contention and bones of contention are what politics are all about. Charlie Gray wrote:

"I am unable to reply on the specific question that you asked as my council has yet to discuss and decide the matter."

Nobody can deny that this will be a big issue and that because the council has not decided on the warrant sale issue, pressure will have to be brought to bear. The letter continues:

"However, I would remind you that our proud record is that in our whole existence we have never carried out a warrant sale in a dwelling in which people were living."

That looks good, but the matter has yet to be clarified by a decision of the regional council. Perhaps it will be possible to take deputations to the regional council and to argue the case against warrant sales. Perhaps there will be a public statement and perhaps the Conservative Government will want to argue against the regional council taking that action. That is the relevance of this issue to the by-election in Glasgow, Central.

There is also a constitutional crisis. I said earlier that few by-elections raise the opportunity to address a range of major issues and I cannot think of any by-election except this which has had the opportunity to address a major constitutional crisis such as the one developing between the judiciary and the Executive in this country. We cannot under-estimate the importance of this issue, because acres of newsprint have been devoted to it. I am sure that your good self, Mr. Speaker, must have read about it extensively in *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* and elsewhere.

Judges in England and Wales have threatened what some people have described as a "one-day strike". Others have described it as a "one-day stoppage" or a "one-day meeting". That has relevance to the people of Glasgow, Central for the very reason that you, Mr. Speaker, mentioned. It is also relevant because part of the judicial system south of the border is part of the superior court system of the House of Lords. Although on criminal matters there can be no appeal from Scotland to the House of Lords, on civil matters the House of Lords is the final court of appeal. In Scotland a case would go to the Outer House, and then to the Inner House, of the Court of Session, and the appeal is then to the House of Lords. Therefore, there is an organic link as well as simply a community interest in what happens in the constitutional crisis that is developing between the judicial system and the Executive.

Some people have said that the House of Lords might strike down Government legislation that has been passed by the House of Commons. That raises a multitude of important issues. The people of Glasgow, Central will be fortunate in being able to address that issue. How often in this country do we have a major debate at a by-election or even at a general election on constitutional matters such as the separation of the powers? We have an unwritten constitution and in such a country it is important for our democratic machinery that we have such debates. Glasgow, Central will probably become the national platform for that debate

The Government are fortunate with their Lord Chancellor of England. He is often called simply the Lord Chancellor, but he is actually the Lord Chancellor of England. He is a Scotsman. He was the Lord Advocate who became a Court of Session judge and then a House of Lords judge. He then joined the Government as their Lord Chancellor. He is Lord MacKay of Clashfern. He is in trouble on other matters that I cannot mention at present. Lord MacKay is likely to take part in the Glasgow, Central by-election, because I cannot imagine Lord MacKay, who wants to push through everything he can, not seizing the opportunity that will be offered by the platform of a by-election in Glasgow, Central if I persuade the House about the moving of the writ.

Although that is a major issue, I realise that I might have to persuade one or two folk of its importance. Some people might have been upset by the fact that the judges threatened to go on strike and to lock their minds away. In *The Times* of 7 March, Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, the former Lord Chancellor, predicted that the legal reforms proposed by the Government would lead to the creation of a Ministry of Justice. *The Times* reported:

"He warned the conference that such a Ministry would see judicial independence go out of the window. The three Green Papers setting out the reforms had been cooked up without evidence and consultation."

Mr. Desmond Fennell, QC, the chairman of the Bar, is reported as saying:

"Seeing justice as a consumer durable would undermine the integrity of the English justice system . . . the underlying approach of the proposals which supported competition and market forces was flawed."

Lord MacKay has also had his say. What a wonderful thing it will be to have the city hall of Glasgow at the centre of this great constitutional debate among the judiciary whose members are now all speaking out. I was taught in politics that judges do not say anything political. Like many other people, I am beginning to change my mind about that because major statements are now being made by judges.

This issue will also affect the small man and Glasgow, Central because the Scottish law reforms are also on their way. There are many solicitors' firms in Glasgow, Central. I know many of them and some are highly prestigious. There has been report after report on that. I have the press cuttings with me, but I shall not read them all because that

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would be tedious, repetitious and out of order. However, I should like to quote the words of Lord William Rees-Mogg in *The Independent:*

"The general tone of the debate was, however, carefully considered and tightly argued. Some newspapers have represented the lawyers' contribution as merely self-interest."

I believe that this issue should be widely debated in Glasgow, Central. We should consider whether the legal interests south of the border that are opposed to the Government's reform measures are acting out of self-interest alone, as was suggested by Lord Rees-Mogg. Despite your views about the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker, you might think that the Scottish electors will have a stand-off attitude to law reforms south of the border. They might consider that it is much ado about nothing because, to be fair to them, the senators of the College of Justice in Edinburgh and the Court of Session have made no statements about the reforms. They have not suggested any outlandish action and no doubt they are operating as they usually do—privately, behind the scenes; in a sense, behind the Chair.

There is an organisation in Scotland, however, that is deeply concerned about the law reforms inside Scotland. I do not believe that anyone, even the hon. Member for Hamilton, would disagree that this matter deserves an early decision at the Glasgow, Central by-election. The electorate will have an opportunity to make a decision on the attitude taken by the Government, the Labour party, the Scottish National party and the Social and Liberal Democratic party as well as by representatives of the Scottish legal profession, especially solicitors.

What is of great interest and of relevance is that the leader of the Law Society of Scotland is Professor Ross Harper. The House may not be aware that Professor Ross Harper is also the president of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association. I cannot imagine for one moment that he would not want to seize the opportunity of getting on the platform during the by-election at Glasgow, Central. After all, that constituency is home to the High Court, the sheriff court and firm after firm of solicitors.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: My husband's firm is based there.

Mr. Sillars: That is another reason why it is impossible to believe that Professor Harper will not seize the opportunity afforded by the by-election.

Professor Harper has already issued major statements that demonstrate his passion and that of the Law Society of Scotland about law reforms in Scotland. He is the president of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association, but the headline of the Scottish Law Council report reads "We Must Be Independent". In that report of his speech he mentions independence 25 times and in one paragraph he mentions it four times. His comments are important as they set the background against which the debate in Glasgow, Central should take place. He said:

"The independence of Scottish law and the distinctive Scottish legal system are important cornerstones of the preservation of a Scottish identity."

He goes on to talk about the independence of the profession and speaks of

"exemption from external control, influence, pressure and support"

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will take note of that, as it will be referred to in another context.

Professor Harper also said:

"Independent solicitors give independent advice. That must be our watchword. Perhaps in a few years it will only be independent solicitors who will be available to give independent advice."

He went on to talk about the protection of the public, and I am sure that the House will agree that that issue warrants an early resolution at the Glasgow, Central by-election. About the argument that one does not need to be a solicitor to do conveyancing, he said:

"While it is odd to answer a question with a question we could perhaps ask ourselves why should lawyers not practise brain surgery."

Perhaps the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) might like to argue with Ross Harper about that. Both men are leading lights in Scottish politics and one can imagine them clashing in the city hall of Glasgow, Central. Ross Harper also quoted Adam Smith and went on to say:

"Regulation is not for the protection of the interests of the profession, but for the protection of the interest of the public."

That is an important matter. He then discussed MDPs —multidisciplinary practices—a matter that the people of Glasgow, Central will want to resolve. That major issue, which affects the Scottish legal profession, can be resolved only by the political process; there is no other way.

I shall not quote any further from the report of the president of the Law Society of Scotland, but it is important to remember that the sheriff court is based in Glasgow, Central. Several members of the Law Society of Scotland have put forward what they have described as "thought-provoking suggestions" on the appointment of sheriffs, which include formal training and psychological assessment. Make no mistake, that will be an issue at the Glasgow, Central by-election. A lot of folk in that constituency know a lot about sheriffs and they have an opinion about whether they are properly trained and, more importantly, whether they should be subject to psychological assessment.

Even the "Doomsday scenario" is mentioned and is relevant to the by-election. You will not be familiar with that phraseology, Mr. Speaker, but it rings bells everywhere in Scotland.

The Lord Advocate and the Law Society of Scotland have fallen out on the question of who should become judges. I shall not go into that, but what the Lord Advocate has said is relevant to why the Scottish legal system should be part of the debate during the by-election campaign. He said:

"In 1980 there were 394 High Court cases and in 1988 there were 889. It is projected that that will rise to 1,120 in 1991."

That demonstates how crime has risen in the past 10 years. There are two levels at which cases are heard in Scotland—either in the sheriff court or in the High Court. For a case to be heard in the High Court one has had to be involved in something guy bad. Our sheriffs have considerable powers, but beyond them lies the High Court. The random quotes I have given demonstrate that the question of legal reform, the constitutional crisis and the separation of powers are relevant and should be decided by the people of Glasgow, Central as soon as possible.

I have studied the newspapers down here and I know that the Government get upset with the Church of England about social issues. Scotland, therefore, is not unique, even

though a special Church and state debate is currently taking place. In Glasgow, Central there is a large churchgoing public of all denominations—the mosque is also found in that constituency.

The Church's view on how things should go was put clearly by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I am sure that no one will mind me quoting the Moderator—I believe that you have met him, Mr. Speaker—as his remarks illustrate the difference of opinion between the Church and state about the values that govern our society north of the border. I am sure that every hon. Member who represents Scotland, including those on the Tory Benches—even the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—would agree that the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church's views on moral values as they affect political judgment and social policy are a red hot issue that should be put before the people of Glasgow, Central so that they can speak on behalf of the Scottish people.

An article in the *Glasgow Herald*, under the heading, "Moderator tells of the struggle for the soul of Scotland", stated:

"The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland said they"—

the Scottish people—

"are not prepared to make money their God, to regard greed as the only motive for economic activity or individualism as the highest form of human life. They stubbornly believe that we are responsible for one another and they are stubbornly loyal to the communities in which they live whether it is a mining village where the pit has been closed, a city"—

this demonstrates its relevance to Glasgow, Central—

"struggling to maintain its services to help the poor, the frail and the handicapped or the struggling confused reality which is Scotland itself, a nation with a history and perhaps a future.

We should now perhaps thank God for the thrawnness of the Scottish soul."

That Scottish thrawnness and the stubborn determination of the right hon. Lady who leads the Government will be central features of the by-election. They were in Govan, and they will be in Glasgow, Central. That is why I quote the Moderator. I cannot think of anyone in recent times who has put the point so clearly and so eloquently.

Of course, there are European issues. Although I do not want the by-election to be involved in the affairs of 15 June, on the domestic side there are questions about the European monetary system and about economic monetary union which are for this Parliament to resolve. There are big divisions between the Government and the Opposition and between ourselves and various other people. Those are matters that should be debated. There is the question whether we should legislate in this House for social Europe. The Leader of the House will accept that that is a point of division in the House. That will be reflected in the debates in Glasgow, Central.

There is also the alleged corruption within the European Community. One of the saddest features of Scottish politics, which the Glasgow, Central by-election will remove for a while, is the absence from Scotland of the hon. Member for Southend, East, (Mr. Taylor). He will be back among us for the by-election. We have missed him. He used to sit for Glasgow, Cathcart. I say in all sincerity that it is sad that he is not involved in Scottish political life now. I miss the debates that I had with him, a sharp wee fellow, wee Teddy, as we knew him in the west of Scotland. He has got a bee in his bonnet, as we say, about corruption in the European Community and about how the Community operates.

I do not want to weary the House with that, but I have no doubt that when the hon. Gentleman comes back—they are bound to send up people who know something about Scotland to act as guides for the "no turning back" English Tories who will be coming up—he will be in his element talking to the folk in various parts of the city. One of the great things about the hon. Gentleman is that he has always managed to talk to the people of Scotland in their own language. No toffee-nosed Tory snob is wee Teddy. I will not go on about it, but it will be one of the nicer features of the by-election when he is back home and we bump into each other in the street. I think that he is unhappy where he is. Even for a short time it will be like home for him. I might even persuade him to look for a seat north of the border next time. Perhaps I could persuade him to stand against me in Govan. However, I will be straying out of order if I go further into that.

Another important issue is universities. Strathclyde university lies right in the heart of Glasgow, Central constituency. It has a law facility and it is a technological university. Its principal is Sir Graham Hills. He is an issue in Glasgow, Central. Let me put it on the record that I have a lot of time for Sir Graham. Some of his ideas about reaching out technologically into the international community are right. Last year I found myself in south-east Asia only a week behind the principal. Strathclyde university has set up former graduate clubs all over the world. The university maintains close technical and commercial contact with them. Sir Graham Hills goes out and meets the clubs. That is good, because there is always the possibility of Scottish companies in Glasgow, Central getting work in south-east Asia and places like that.

Sir Graham has other points of view that are highly contentious in the constituency. His views on how universities should be funded veer to the side of the Government. I am being polite in saying that. I think hon. Members will agree that it is unusual that the opinions of a principal of a great university should be an issue in a by-election, but they will be. There are important issues such as student funding, student loans and morale inside the university.

I mentioned that the university has a law faculty. One great problem in universities is that law faculties are being starved of resources. That is happening not just in Scottish universities. The law faculty at Cambridge was complaining about that only last week. That issue should be debated in Glasgow, Central. If we do not put enough resources into the law faculty, it will not produce the legal minds necessary to take us into a more technical society governed by a framework of law.

Local government reform is another important matter. It may surprise some members of the Government to learn that in Ayrshire the Secretary of State for Defence has been in a cabal that is trying to break up Strathclyde region, reform it and create Ayrshire as a region on its own. Hon. Members may ask what that has to do with Glasgow, Central. Strathclyde region cannot be carved up without it having an effect upon the status of Glasgow district council, whose headquarters are right in the middle of George square. It will no doubt come out in the debate that, while the Labour group in Strathclyde is not happy about the Ayrshire initiative of the Secretary of State for Defence in his capacity as the local Member of Parliament, the Labour group on the city council is not unhappy about it because it would make it, as it were, a one-purpose local

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government unit. It will be a big question whether the Government will be steered by the former Secretary of State for Scotland, now the Secretary of State for Defence, hanging on by 182 votes, who is very concerned to bring about reform of local government.

I make no apology for raising another matter that has arisen within the last 48 hours—the decision of the Scottish Rugby Union to sanction people going to South Africa. A constituency that has Nelson Mandela square right in its heart is bound to regard that as a major issue in the by-election.

We are very proud of Nelson Mandela square. We had to take on the Tories to have the name changed. We did it to embarrass the South African consul general in Mandela square and also to show solidarity with black people in South Africa. Now the Scottish Rugby Union is saying that it will be an individual matter whether people go to South Africa. It has said that it will see whether the Scottish squad would be available. It is facilitating contacts with South Africa and it will give players permission to go there. That will be a major issue in the by-election. I do not know whether you read *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, Mr. Speaker. I have found in debate with English Members that they do not read *The Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Daily Record*, the Glasgow *Evening Times*—

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I read the *Glasgow Herald* every Monday.

Mr. Sillars: One English Labour Member reads the *Glasgow Herald* every Monday. That is always something. If he reads Murray Ritchie on the back page, he will learn a great deal about Scottish politics and Scottish life.

The decision of the Scottish Rugby Union should be an important debating point in the Glasgow, Central by-election. With the exception of the Tory party, there will be great unanimity to bring pressure to bear upon the Scottish Rugby Union to reverse its scandalous decision.

I have talked of national issues, but there are others. The hon. Member for Hamilton earlier wanted to bring my remarks to a conclusion. He is one of the Opposition foreign affairs spokesmen. If we extract the Glasgow, Central by-election from 15 June and subject it to scrutiny on its own, we see that there is no way that Labour's defence policy will not be examined closely. I have known the hon. Gentleman since he was a student at Dundee. I know his point of view on nuclear disarmament. He is what is called a multilateralist. I can well understand the desire to slip it past the folk in Glasgow, Central. The Labour party managed to slip it past the folk in the Vale of Glamorgan. We are approaching the day when it must be open and should be looked at.

In Glasgow, Central, right in the heart of Clydeside, where we have lived with Polaris and are to be told to live with Trident, there are umpteen experts on the nuclear issue. There are organisations all over the place, located in Glasgow, Central, that send representatives to every meeting of the Labour party to ask where it stands. One of the questions would be, "Would you press the trigger?" It is not for me to say in this debate whether we should or should not, although I personally would not. That is the sort of question that will be raised and I can understand the Labour party wanting to slip it past us.

If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, read *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, you will know how important Scottish sovereignty was. The Scottish Constitutional Convention is sitting and there are differences of opinion on the issue. There are great debates taking place in Scotland about our constitutional future. It is an intriguing situation. That may be another reason why the hon. Member for Hamilton wanted to curtail the debate.

What we in Scotland call a fankle has developed and it must be unravelled. Sovereignty will be a big issue and we should have an early resolution of it. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know, the conventional view, which has never been wholly accepted in Scotland, is that Parliament is sovereign. Having read *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald* in recent weeks, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be aware that Labour Members of Parliament went to Edinburgh for the week of the convention and signed a solemn declaration that the Scottish people were sovereign.

The Scottish people cannot be sovereign if Parliament is sovereign. That is a contradiction in terms. Those Labour Members may well believe that that is the case, but does that represent the official Labour party policy? That issue should be debated in Glasgow, Central and that fankle should be examined.

The deputy leader of the Labour party has travelled the country attacking Charter '88, which calls for a written constitution and a Bill of Rights. The right hon. Gentleman has attacked them because he supports the sovereignty of Parliament. The quicker we get the deputy leader of the Labour party on to a platform in Glasgow, Central, along with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who leads the Labour party in Scotland, the quicker—subject to press conferences and interrogation—we will know whether Labour Members believe in the sovereignty of the Scottish people or of Parliament.

The dual mandate is discussed at Labour party conferences. One of the national newspapers says that honours are even. The dual mandate is even more intriguing than the hon. Member for Garscadden signing the declaration of sovereignty while the deputy leader of the Labour party attacks any idea other than the sovereignty of Parliament. An element in the Labour party is putting forward the idea of a dual mandate. At the next general election, or possibly at the by-election, the Labour party may ask for a dual mandate. It is important to resolve this matter.

I am an objective neutral, but the matter seems to be a contradiction in terms. Labour party members cannot say, "Send us down to Westminster where we are sovereign, but if somebody votes against us, we can be sovereign in our own country." I could be wrong, but these matters must be debated during the by-election campaign.

Glasgow is an area of long-time working-class activity and organisation. All Opposition Members know that, as do one or two Conservative Members. In Glasgow, we are particularly proud of Glasgow Green. I mentioned that earlier and shall not be tedious and repetitious. Glasgow Green is the meeting ground of many a great working class rally.

I understand why the hon. Member for Hamilton did not want this debate to continue or to debate secondary picketing at the Glasgow, Central by-election. However, it is important and I want it debated at the by-election. I suspect that some Conservative Members will want the

matter to be debated at the by-election. If we have a by-election at an early date, it will clear up the dubiety. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is the Front Bench Labour party spokesman on employment. I have two press cuttings, one from the *Financial Times*, which says:

"Meacher call to restore union rights disowned."

I thought that he must be being disowned by the Government. However, it seems that he is being disowned by his own party at a senior, shadow Cabinet level. The fact that that appeared in the *Financial Times* is important because people in the business community read it.

Many trade unionists read the *Glasgow Herald* and many of them live in Glasgow, Central. The *Glasgow Herald* said:

"Labour disowns Meacher views on secondary picketing."

We should note the difference between the two newspapers. In the *Financial Times*, it said merely that the hon. Gentleman was disowned, but there was much more accurate reporting in the *Glasgow Herald*, which said that Labour had disowned its own spokesman's views on secondary picketing. That will be an important issue.

There are many working-class people in Glasgow, Central, and they are well organised. They should have an early opportunity to ask the Labour candidate and the Labour party where they stand on secondary picketing. That is extremely important to the trade union movement because, due to the outlawing of secondary picketing, men have been defeated in strike after strike. I know the hon. Member for Hamilton well from his Right-wing trade union days, and I understand why he would not want that issue examined.

You will be pleased to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am probably coming near the end of my remarks, and I am grateful for your patience. I am glad that there was no private notice question for us to fall out about today.

I have already mentioned that we do not have a Select Committee on Scottish affairs, however, an alternative has been set up by Opposition Members. It is touring Scotland, taking evidence and examining crucial issues. The Glasgow, Central by-election offers the alternative committee an excellent opportunity to meet in Glasgow, Central to take evidence from major institutions such as the Scottish Trades Union Congress, and from Scottish doctors and nursing unions about their views on the Health Service. They could make a significant contribution to the political debate. If I could persuade them to engage in such activity, what a tragedy it would be if there was a by-election on 15 June, in the middle of the European election, and the focus was lost.

I want to talk about Prestwick and Glasgow airports. Some people might ask what Prestwick has to do with Glasgow. I am glad that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South is present, because he has a strong interest in this. There is an intriguing relationship between the futures of Prestwick and Glasgow airports, and Glasgow airport's relationship to the centre of Glasgow, to which the air of culture and the development of the city is extremely important. In recent weeks there have been major debates about this.

I shall not be partisan. I used to represent South Ayrshire, but I have not changed my views because I have shifted geographically. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, South will be delighted to hear that. A decision was taken at the Court of Session in Edinburgh which seems to spell the death knell for Prestwick airport —it only looked like that. There were legal problems attached to the decision because, I believe it was not a sound legal judgment. I mention that to illustrate the importance of another major issue which should be talked about and which can be talked about only if a by-election takes place.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has publicly expressed grave concern about the White Paper proposals on the future of Scottish broadcasting. One factor that will emerge in this by-election is the fact that the White Paper on broadcasting did not contain the word "Scotland". That will be a hard charge to answer. We want a Home Office Minister to go to Scotland to explain to the Scottish people why that happened. That is highly relevant to Glasgow, Central.

Scottish Television is our biggest independent television company. It employs a fair number of people and exerts a major influence on life in west central Scotland, including the life of the Glasgow, Central constituency. Many people are very loyal to that television channel. Issues to debate are whether one or more independent companies should operate in Scotland, and whether licences should be simply on a financial basis or whether quality and commitment to Scottish broadcasting should come first. Those important issues involve culture—Glasgow, Central sits at the centre of the city of culture—but they affect employment as well.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that the Prime Minister herself will be an issue in the by-election. Her 10 years in power are to be tested in Wales tomorrow, and there is also to be an important opportunity for them to be tested in Scotland. If I catch your eye during Prime Minister's Question Time, Mr. Speaker, I hope to persuade the right hon. Lady to come to Glasgow, Central for the by-election and to go through the streets and into areas of housing meeting people who endure torture from damp homes, unemployment and poverty. That, in my view, is a Prime Minister's role: the Prime Minister should not be afraid to come and meet the people who she says have never been better off.

One of the tragedies of the English Prime Ministers —I know that you do not see it in the same way, Mr. Speaker—is that they are locked into Downing street and develop the bunker mentality. They are surrounded by people who tell them what they want to hear rather than what they should know. Our Prime Minister takes photo opportunities using the backgrounds that she prefers: if she wants to project the image of an up-and-coming United Kingdom, for instance, the background to the photo opportunity will be a new factory. I think that her role is to get out into the streets and meet the people who are profoundly and fundamentally affected by her policies.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Earlier my hon. Friend mentioned a subject dear to his heart, saying that he would return to it: he referred to the large Chinese population in Glasgow, Central. My wife taught at Garnethill primary school, which was attended by members of the Chinese community.

Although the ethnic minorities that my hon. Friend has mentioned, Pakistani, Indian and Chinese, are very much Glaswegians and have been welcomed into Glasgow—some of the best Chinese restaurants anywhere are to be found in Glasgow, Central—they also feel strongly about their origins and places of birth. Does my hon. Friend think that in the by-election campaign members of the Chinese community will raise the question of Hong

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

Kong's future? I know that my hon. Friend has an interest in that. To what extent does he believe that the population of Glasgow, Central will share his concern?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a bit wide of the by-election.

Mr. Sillars: I should like to persuade you differently, Mr. Speaker. In the House of Lords, Lord Glenarthur, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said that the reason why the Government did not propose a right of abode to the citizens of Hong Kong was that

"it did not believe that there was sufficient support in this country for wholesale changes to the law that would entail the prospect, albeit a theoretical one, of large-scale immigration from Hong Kong."

The key words are

"did not believe that there was sufficient support in this country".

How do we know that that is the case unless we put it to the test?

I have a long-standing interest in Hong Kong: my son was born there, and I have many friends who are Hong Kong citizens. When I was working there last year I met a number of members of the democratic organisations there who are seeking certain rights before 1997. The Chinese community in Glasgow is raising the Hong Kong issue. It wants the Government to engage in a test of public support—and, of course, a by-election provides a perfect opportunity for people to state their position and to commit themselves.

It is entirely fair for a Chinese from Hong Kong with a vote and right of residence in Glasgow, Central to go along to each election and ask, "Would you support a change in the British Nationality Act?"

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East raised the matter; I had meant to deal with it, but my train of thought was upset by all the points of order. Islamic issues will also figure prominently because of the position of the mosque in Glasgow, Central.

All the issues that I have mentioned are reasons for the motion to be accepted, and for the by-election to take place at an early date. I hope that I have persuaded most hon. Members who have managed to attend this short debate. I am aware that other hon. Members want to take part: perhaps, like the hon. Member for Bolsover, they will be eloquent enough to persuade me that I am wrong, but at this moment I think that an early by-election would be a very good thing.

7.26 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move, That the Question be not now put.

I trust, Mr. Speaker, that you will keep me in order and give me guidance.

This has been a rather strange day. We have witnessed something of a performance by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). The hon. Gentleman prayed in aid one of my colleagues, who is also a noted exponent of the lengthy speech in the Chamber. All that I can say is that he has proved that he is not my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner): there was none of the lightness of touch, the wit and the ability to engage sympathy that can be the mark of my hon. Friend.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be disappointed if I say that the past three or four hours have provided us with a new definition of boredom. I fear, moreover, that it has been an essay in futility. A press release in the hon. Gentleman's name made it clear that this would be a filibuster, by stating that there was no intention actually to move the writ. While I accept that on occasion we all conduct exercises for the benefit of the press, I feel that this example has gone beyond the normal bounds—and the tragedy is that it will achieve absolutely nothing. We shall have to see how the day continues, but I suspect that the only achievement of the hon. Gentleman's exercise will be a vote on the admittedly obnoxious Self-Governing Schools etc. Bill at around 1.30 am, rather than at 7 pm.

Mr. Sillars: Why should that be so? I have been in the House before, and the motion on that Bill would not have been passed with a different type of organised Labour Opposition. The hon. Gentleman and his team are not up to the game that is required.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion. It is an opinion that he often expresses in Scotland, frequently in terms of personal abuse, which those of us in politics and many outside it find extremely offensive. But that is his problem.

I do not know exactly how the day will end, but it is clear that, for all his efforts, the best that the hon. Gentleman can achieve will be a vote some four or five hours later than it would otherwise have taken place. If that is his monument, it seems to me to be a very small monument indeed.

It is not for me to delay the House with a lengthy speech, particularly in view of what has gone before. However, I move this motion for a good reason, in defence of a very important principle—which I understand, if we are to take his speech at face value, the hon. Member for Govan does not accept.

It has long been the understanding in this House that the party which held the seat which has been vacated—in this case, very sadly, through the tragic and unexpected death of Bob McTaggart—should have control over moving the writ. I have chosen the terms of my motion on advice, because I understand that, if we voted to defeat the motion that the writ be moved, the unintended—at least, I hope unintended—consequence would be that no writ could be moved for a further six months. That would be wrong for democratic practice.

The manoeuvre today is risky. We are trying to avoid the consequence of no writ being moved for a further six months and at the same time to defend the principle that the party which held the seat should decide the date of the by-election.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends are aware that this is a principle of some importance to all Opposition parties. It is perhaps arguable that it is particularly important for smaller Opposition parties. If we begin to undermine the principle, we may well be on the way to a situation in which the Government will dominate in that respect as well. Governments of the day, of whatever political persuasion, might start to set the dates for by-elections without consulting or heeding the views of the party which had been successful in that constituency at the previous election.

If there ever was a vacant Scottish National party seat —if something happened to remove one of the four hon. Members—they would be extremely irritated and angry if the Labour party or the Conservative party moved the writ and bulldozed it through using their big battalions in the Lobby. Sometimes a convention can irritate. Sometimes it is even hard to explain or defend conventions. However, in a Parliament in which the power of the Executive is enormous, given our political system, convention can be an important way of defending individual and small group interests. I have no doubt that moving the writ is one of those conventions. Apparently the hon. Member for Govan speaking for all his hon. Friends, is prepared to sacrifice that principle, and the Labour party regards that as very unfortunate. I hope that it will not be misinterpreted if I say that in making this stand we are trying to save the SNP from the logic of its own position.

It is important that the party which held the seat should have certain rights. It will want to consult local people. The hon. Member for Govan waxed eloquent about the importance of local consultation and of the local party and its role in these matters. I believe that that is important. The Labour party will want to consult its people in Glasgow, Central who helped to elect Bob McTaggart and who supported him until his very sad death. It is important that there should be a period of mourning and a period to collect and wind up the affairs of the late Member. I am not prepared to sacrifice that principle or those rights simply because that might be an advantageous way of making a rather pointless demonstration on the Floor of the House, which is presumably designed and calculated to get a few headlines in tomorrow's Scottish newspapers.

This manoeuvre will not work. We are all in the business of agitation and putting across a point of view, but it goes beyond the bounds of honesty to pretend that this kind of demonstration, carried out in this way, is fighting for Scotland or will divert or change the course of events in this House. We will change matters ultimately through the ballot box, by winning the argument on the basis of a rational case. I do not believe that we will achieve that in the way pursued by the hon. Member for Govan.

I protest against the futility, and perhaps, if I may say so, the conceit, of what has been practised here today. An important matter of principle is at stake and I believe that I carry my right hon. and hon. Friends with me in this respect. For these reasons, the motion moved by the hon. Member for Govan is insincere and hypocritical—I can state that in terms of his press release. It is inappropriate, wrong and damaging to the interests of the Opposition. I am not prepared to ask any of my right hon. and hon. Friends to take part in this conspiracy or to sacrifice the interests of opposition parties, of the House and of the democratic system simply to put a cheap and worthless point into print in tomorrow's papers. For that reason, I believe that the question should not be put.

7.35 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): We are discussing a very important issue. The debate began with a long exposition about the necessity for an early by-election. There is a vacancy in the constituency of Glasgow, Central and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) put forward what sounded like a highly principled argument for an early by-election. He told us that the principle involved the moving of the writ not being in the gift of parties. He told us that this was a matter of some consequence to the representation of people in Glasgow, Central.

During the course of the debate, word came down from the Press Gallery and we began to realise that what we were listening to was what we suspected all along—that the hon. Member for Govan was filibustering. He was using a procedural device. He was using, perhaps even abusing, the procedures of the House to make a political point outside the House. The emptiness of the hon. Gentleman's principle became all too vivid.

The press release stated that this filibuster was intended to be a procedural device to slow up the Government's guillotine on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill. That is what the outside world has been told, although the House has been told something entirely different.

We know, though, that this device will only delay the guillotine on that obnoxious and unwanted legislation until 10 o'clock this evening. Either the hon. Member for Govan and his party believed that they could go after 10 o'clock this evening and that that would somehow frustrate the Government's intention to bring forward the guillotine, or they did not know that the procedures would limit the debate to 10 o'clock. In that case, they have scored yet another own goal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has pinpointed the major issue. The decision on the moving of a writ for a by-election has, by custom and practice, as the hon. Member for Govan quite fairly pointed out, been moved by the party which had held that seat. Of course that procedure has its own imperfections. However, the hon. Member for Govan pretended to the House that he wanted to change it.

The parliamentary SNP has tried to deceive this House or the outside world, via the press. It has told the House that it is interested in a principle related to the timing of the by-election. However, it has told the press, and via the press whoever else is interested, that it is really interested in something completely different.

I remember a speech that I heard within a few months of first entering the House. On 9 November 1978, during the debate on the Loyal Address, the then hon. Member for South Ayrshire made one of the most effective attacks on the Scottish National party that I had heard for some time. That hon. Gentleman—now the hon. Member for Govan—said:

> "Throughout the last four years that SNP Members have sat in this House they have lacked cohesion and strategy and they are . . . hopeless tacticians."

Nothing changes. Eleven years later, the hon. Gentleman returns to the House with a set of tactics that would make that former Member for South Ayrshire weep, if he were to use his critical faculties.

What makes me more sorry than angry about this afternoon's display is that the hon. Member for Govan used a device, hidden and cloaked under the pretence of principle, that he knows is as important to his party as it is to others. It does not necessarily offer a one-party advantage. The hon. Member for Govan wheeled out a fair amount of the cynicism of the ages, but it is important, for reasonable, decent and human reasons, to maintain that convention. There is no better illustration of that than the case of Glasgow, Central.

When the hon. Member for Govan makes a cheap publicity point out of the circumstances surrounding the

[Mr. George Robertson]

by-election, he sinks to depths that we never really expected of him. Bob McTaggart died only a few weeks ago, aged 43—the same age as myself. He has a young family still living in the constituency. There is something indecent about an exercise that involves grabbing headlines in circumstances that will upset the bereaved.

A period should be allowed to elapse between the tragic death of a young Member of Parliament and the electorate being consulted about his successor. The electors of Glasgow, Central know that only too well. Their problems and complaints are currently being dealt with, with due dedication, by hon. Members representing the surrounding constituencies. There is something slightly seedy about the tactic that we have seen used this afternoon, in which the SNP Members suggest that they will, in all their wisdom, make a decision at an early date to issue the writ for a by-election and that we will go along, willy-nilly, with them.

Another question involved in any test of the electorate is local consultation as to the timing of a by-election. If Glasgow, Central had been held by one of the four SNP Members, or by any of the three that have been present in the Chamber during this afternoon's display, they would expect the same consideration to apply—and few right hon. and hon. Members would dissent from such an arrangement.

One of the worst iniquities arising from this afternoon's seedy exercise is that the hon. Member for Govan is handing the initiative to the Conservatives. If the principle is applied that any old person can move the writ, if the convention is not to be observed, or if there is to be a break in the convention that has been observed until now, of course the majority, Government party will inevitably take over any decision concerning a new writ, as they do so many other decisions.

The hon. Member for Govan and his hon. Friends give no thought to that aspect. They are concerned only with securing a few headlines in tomorrow's newspapers. However, they do a disservice to the members of the press if they believe that their tactics will automatically achieve for them the press coverage that they anticipate.

Government Members may consider that the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill is a good and necessary piece of legislation and that it must be pushed through. However, there is a substantial division of opinion in the House, and in Scotland there is virtual unanimity that the Bill is not wanted. However, instead of debate on that Bill taking place at a time when it would be well reported, and when the poverty of the Government's arguments would be highlighted, the success of the tacticians on the SNP Benches means that the debate will be postponed and carried off until the middle of the night.

That is the publicity coup of the hon. Member for Govan. Over the course of four or five hours, and just slightly within the rules of order, mumbo-jumbo has been churned out to make a point that has not anyway been honestly made. We know that one argument has been made outside the Chamber and another inside it. At the end of the day, we are no clearer about the SNP's objectives than we were at the start.

The hon. Member for Govan mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who seems to be his role model, and quoted the remark of my hon. Friend that the device of moving the writ would be used again—but only within the limits that the Government, with their silent majority, are willing to tolerate. The consequence of the hon. Member for Govan's actions is that another tactic will probably be lost. At the end of the day, the Conservative Benches will be stronger, not the voice of the Scottish people.

I have known the hon. Member for Govan for many years. I am sure that he will agree that for many years we used to call ourselves friends. We used to lunch together most days in the canteen of the General and Municipal Workers Union in Glasgow before the hon. Member entered the House of Commons and promised us all tea on the Terrace. What is so disappointing about this afternoon's exercise is the lowering of dignity that has been necessary to undertake it. That is the most distressing and disappointing aspect off all.

I remind the House of the words of the hon. Member for Govan in the debate on the Loyal Address on 19 November 1978. They give a message to us all:

> "I do not think that at the end of the day anything will save SNP Members from the consequences of their own folly. One must go back a very considerable period in the history of Scotland to find the Scottish people so badly served by a group of self-appointed generals. The best description of the Scottish National Party is that if they had been in charge at Flodden we Scots would have lost even if the English Army had been on our side."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1978; Vol. 957, c. 1273-4, 1276.]

The hon. Member was right in 1978, and his words also ring true this evening.

7.47 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) illustrates precisely the Labour party's difficulties. He fulminates about other hon. Members unnecessarily using parliamentary time but then commits the same crime of which he accuses them. The hon. Member speaks of seedy actions and unseemly haste, but those words cannot come easily from a Labour party which has already chosen its candidate for Glasgow, Central—whose photograph appears today in *The Scotsman*, and who is already holding press conferences. That is another example of Labour's double standards.

The contributions that the House has just heard from two Labour Members show that the Labour party is perfectly willing to use up parliamentary time, but only if it can do so to attack the SNP. The Labour party could have joined in to ensure that the only weapon available to the Opposition—time—was used to block Government legislation. Even a 15-minute contribution from Labour Members tonight could have effectively held up Government business—but that is not something that the Labour party were willing to do. The Labour Opposition are clearly disorganised and do not know what they are about in terms of parliamentary business. The Government Whips must love them.

Question, That the Question be not now put, *put and agreed to.*

Self-governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill (Allocation of Time)

7.49 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 18th May 1989.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 18th May may continue until Ten o'clock whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 19th May 1989.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in one allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at midnight on that day; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of that day as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolution as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusions of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

7.—(1) On the allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to said period of two hours.

(3) If the allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on the allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed by the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a member of the Government;

(d) and other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If the allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour

[Mr. John Wakeham]

after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on the allotted day the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee as the time at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

I do not think that I need remind the House of the importance of the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill, to which my motion seeks to apply a timetable. I know that the measure is controversial, especially among Scottish Members, but I believe that it is also a sound and beneficial one. I would hope that the passions aroused by the Bill's contents will not prevent us this evening from discussing and deciding upon a reasonable framework within which the Bill may be hotly disputed.

One of the Bill's main aims is to enable Scottish schools to withdraw from local authority control to become self-governing schools, run by individual boards of management and funded directly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. Other provisions relate to the establishment of college councils for colleges of further education; the formation of companies to manage colleges; and the abolition of the committee to consider pay and conditions of further education teaching staff. In addition, the Bill provides for the establishment of technology academies, testing in primary schools, and the appraisal of teachers and lecturers. Taken as a whole, those measures represent a radical and dynamic package which will meet the developing needs of education in Scotland.

To those ends, the Government consider it most desirable that the first schools which wish to do so should be able to achieve self-governing status by the beginning of the 1990-91 school year—in August 1990. Moreover, the Bill sets 1 April 1990 as the date by which college councils are to be established. Interested parties will need to know in good time the legislative base on which they can proceed, including the regulations specifying which colleges are exempt from these provisions, and, perhaps most importantly, if we are to have the first tests in primary 4 and primary 7 running in the schools by the school year 1990-91, the Scottish Examination Board will need the extension of its powers under clause 63 as early as possible, so that the process of writing, scrutinising and processing test items can be completed by May 1991. To ensure that those developments can take place in an orderly and timely fashion, we need to commit ourselves to a definite timetable for the rest of the Bill's passage through the House.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can hardly hear the Leader of the House. If he were in a Scottish primary school, and if we still had the strap, he would get it. Will he please speak up so that we can hear exactly of what he is trying to convince the House? His speech is not convincing in substance, but delivered in that manner it will never——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Chair is not responsible for substance. The occupant of the Chair has very good hearing, and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman also had quite good hearing.

Mr. Wakeham: Although the hon. Gentleman did not hear what I was saying, I noticed that he was still able to comment on its substance. To the hon. Gentleman's better hearing, I am proposing a timetable for the Bill.

Mr. Foulkes: I know that.

Mr. Wakeham: Good.

The Committee has so far spent about 120 hours discussing part I of the Bill. It must make quicker progress on the remaining 25 clauses if the Bill is to be enacted in time to enable the necessary measures that I have just outlined to be taken. In devising the timetable motion, I have sought to ensure proper and orderly consideration for the remainder of the Bill. There are, in fact, not more than 10 substantive clauses in the Bill which remain to be looked at, but the motion that I am proposing would allow for a further 36 hours for discussion in Committee, making a total of 156 in all. In addition, there will be a full day until midnight on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading. That is in keeping with the generous provisions which have become a traditional feature of the timetable motions that I have moved.

I have in mind, too, the need for a balanced consideration of the Bill. I accept, of course, that part I of the Bill, dealing as it does with provisions for self-governing schools, is the most controversial, but part II on further education, and part III, making provision for

technology academies, testing in primary schools, appraisal of teachers, and other matters, should also receive adequate scrutiny.

Mr. Foulkes: The Leader of the House may know that there is great concern in Scottish universities about the regrettable proposals to remove the rector from the chairmanship of the court. How much time will be allocated to discuss this in Committee and on the Floor of the House? It is a matter which some hon. Members who are not members of the Committee but who have some experience in Scottish universities wish to discuss. As the Leader of the House is trying to convince us to vote for his timetable motion, will he say exactly how much time will be allocated to that important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself for a moment, he will discover the answer to that conundrum.

To ensure that the Bill has adequate scrutiny, the motion, like previous timetable motions, includes provision for allocating the time in Standing Committee and on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading by reference to a Business Sub-Committee and a Business Committee which will determine how much time shall be allocated to the hon. Gentleman's point within the constraints of the motion.

Mr. Foulkes: I understand that the Leader of the House will play a leading role in the Business Committee. Will he ensure that the Business Committee gives proper consideration to the allocation of adequate time to the matter of the chairmanship of the court of the ancient universities of Scotland? It is a matter of some importance and has caused great controversy in Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I have a particular interest in the matter. We are not members of the Committee so we would want to discuss the matter on the Floor of the House on Report. Will the Leader of the House bear that in mind?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not a member of the Committee either, so I shall not be present when those matters are discussed, but no doubt members of the Committee will take into account the hon. Gentleman's important considerations and ensure that time is allocated in the best interests of discussing the Bill in a proper and effective way. That seems to me the key to the sensibly weighted consideration of the rest of the Bill, giving the chance for those who are experienced in these matters, and, in the case of the Sub-Committee, for those who are most closely acquainted with the Bill's provisions, to discuss the timing and divide the available time appropriately between clauses. Moreover, since many of the provisions in the remaining clauses are technical or consequential, the Business Sub-Committee will have considerable scope for manoeuvre.

The time has come for the House to apply a timetable to the Bill. Any objective reading of the Standing Committee *Hansard* will convince right hon. and hon. Members that the Committee is not making as much progress as one might wish. The plain fact is that the Opposition have striven from the start to have the Bill guillotined. It is not my normal practice to make accusations of deliberate time wasting, but I must confess that my eyebrows rose a couple of notches when I read of the Chairman upbraiding the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) for his tedious repetition in a speech that lasted for more than two hours. The same hon. Gentleman went on to conduct what might be termed a silent filibuster, standing but not speaking as he tried to eke out the proceedings for a few more minutes. I found tales of the glories of Blackpool, of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) having the ability to spin a football on his finger, and other examples of the Opposition deliberately prolonging the debate for several hours on amendments which Ministers had already said they would accept.

To take just one example, I notice that, at 3.50 am on last Tuesday's sitting. my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State accepted the Opposition's amendment extending the period of consultation after the result of the parents' ballot, from one month to three. Despite that, and despite a plea from the Chair that, when both sides of the Committee were agreed on a matter, it should be dealt with quickly, the Opposition continued to debate the issue for another half hour. This must be regarded, at such an hour in the morning, as a somewhat unusual way to proceed. None of these examples creates the impression that the Bill has been insufficiently considered.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is it not strange that, when the Under-Secretary agreed to accept the amendment, Government Back Benchers combined to vote it down and defeat the Minister's intentions?

Mr. Wakeham: I was not present, but my hon. Friend the Minister said that he would consider accepting the amendment. I have no doubt that my hon. Friends advanced cogent and sensible arguments to persuade him to move from accepting to considering the amendment.

I appreciate that it is a time-honoured tactic to use delay as a weapon against the Government, but it is equally legitimate for a Government to ensure that their business is not lost on that account. I commend the motion to the House in the belief that it represents a realistic way to debate the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): In his sentence before last, the Leader of the House—significantly—remarked that the Government wanted to get their legislation through. Is it not a plain fact, given the right hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks, that the Government had in mind a terminal date by which they must have the Bill?

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) shakes his head, but I am quite sure that the Leader of the House is quite capable of answering the question himself. Is it not a plain fact that the Government had in mind a terminal date by which they must have this legislation? That is the reason for the motion, not thorough and valid consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: Managing the Government's business does not work like that. At the beginning of the year we have a series of Bills that must be passed by the end of the Session.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has had two goes. The first time he was not listening, and I am now trying to answer the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas). I certainly do not intend to give way any more to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon

[Mr. Wakeham]

Valley. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West asked an intelligent question and I am trying to give an intelligent answer.

We certainly have a programme for the year, but it is not a final date for the Bill but the fact that 120 hours have been spent on part I that caused us to move the guillotine. In total, the Bill, which has 72 clauses, will spend 156 hours in Committee, compared with the Education Reform Act 1988, which had 147 clauses and spent 163 hours in Committee, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which had 131 clauses and spent 136 hours in Committee, and the Water Bill, which has 180 clauses and has spent 153 hours in Committee. By any standards——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House has said that he is not likely to give way for a moment or two.

Mr. Wakeham: I feel sorry for the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, so I give way.

Mr. Foulkes: I have visited the Vale of Glamorgan, so I know why the Leader of the House is not looking too happy today.

The right hon. Gentleman argued that Government have a programme to get through, and we understand that that is the responsibility of Government. Will he compare the number of Bills being packed into this Session with those in previous Sessions? The Prime Minister has said in the past that the burden of legislation considered by the House is too heavy.

Last year, we considered opting out for England and the Secretary of State for Scotland said that it would not apply in Scotland. The Bill therefore was not anticipated, was not included in any manifesto and was not announced.

Mr. Wakeham: It appears that the hon. Gentleman has had rather a tiring day in the Vale of Glamorgan. He should have a chat with the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—we know that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley listens only to his own speeches—who has made a number of speeches criticising the Government for getting their legislation through. Compared with past years, the number of Bills in this Session has not been as high, but their quality has been extremely high. The proper time to announce the Government's legislative programme is the Queen's Speech, but as the hon. Gentleman did not make that speech I suppose that he did not listen to it.

I commend the motion to the House.

8.5 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): As the 200th anniversary of the commencement of the French revolution draws nearer, the Leader of the House looks more and more like Madame Defarge in drag. He added nothing to the consistency of his approach, because in recent debates on guillotine motions he usually said that it is not the Opposition who have protracted debate in Committee but the Government's business managers who have become tired of debate and embarrassed by the performance of Ministers. I have reason to believe that next week we may be debating a further guillotine on the Dock Work Bill. The right hon. Gentleman will scarcely be able to make allegations of protracted debate on that Bill, which has had only three sittings.

Today, the right hon. Gentleman has accused my Scottish colleagues of not making serious efforts to debate the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill. The motion does not mark a difference in Labour party tactics but is a Tory smokescreen to cover the shambles of this measure. In his sketch of proceedings in Committee, the right hon. Gentleman missed out one or two significant points. If the Government were doing their job properly, how does he explain that on several occasions so few Tory Members turned up that there was not a quorum and the Committee was unable to continue?

Nor did the right hon. Gentleman mention that, as a result of the assiduous work of my hon. Friends, the Government have made nearly 30 concessions, admittedly of varying significance. My understanding is that making points, obtaining explanations and securing changes to a Bill are the purpose of the Committee stage.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I shall not give way at the moment.

Mr. Walker: Why not?

Mr. Dobson: I do not feel like it; that is one good reason.

There is a host of reasons for objecting to the motion to curtail debate on this important Bill. The short title of the Bill, Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland), is good enough reason for opposing it. The "etc." gives the game away and sums up the Government's attitude to education in general and Scottish education in particular. Who else but this Tory Government would dismiss in one three-letter abbreviation such major changes? Only a Tory with no direct connection to education in Scotland could encompass within "etc." major changes such as testing in primary schools, the appraisal and dismissal of teachers and lecturers, the abolition of the machinery for considering the pay and conditions of teaching staff and the establishment of companies to manage colleges, not to mention the placing of recorded children and young people in schools. All that is dismissed by one insulting "etc.". That "etc." covers clauses 48 to 72 which still await the Committee's scrutiny. If, as the Opposition expect, the parents of Scotland see sense and do not take up the proposition of having self-governing schools, these "etcs." will have a much more damaging impact on education in Scotland.

It is not just the Bill's title that insults everyone in Scotland who is concerned with education. At every stage the people, parents and teachers of Scotland have been treated with contempt. The best illustration of that is the history of the self-proclaimed main purpose of the Bill —to get some schools to opt out. The Government have no mandate from the people of Scotland for this proposal.

It is not that opting out was rejected by the people of Scotland at the last election. It is not even that opting out in Scotland was approved by the people of England at the last election, which is one of the curious propositions for mandates that the Government put forward. It is not even that opting out in Scotland was not mentioned by the Tories in Scotland at the last election. At the last election in Scotland, the Tories denied that they would introduce

opting out in Scotland. If they have any mandate in Scotland on this matter, it is a mandate not to force opting out on the people in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not give way earlier. I had a relevant point to make. I shall make it in my speech, if I am called, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman should be careful about the categorical statements that he makes from the Front Bench. Those of us who were elected in Scotland——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): No many.

Mr. Walker: —do as many do, regardless of which party we represent, and put forward in our constituencies our personal views. I was elected on the basis—nothing in our manifesto said otherwise—that I would try to persuade the Government, if returned, to give schools the opportunity to opt out. That is on record in 44 speeches. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw his comment.

Mr. Dobson: It appears that opting out in education is following a precedent that the hon. Gentleman set during the general election. He apparently opted out of the Tories' election manifesto. That is very convenient for him at this moment. As I have said before in the House, when I discovered that the hon. Gentleman represented Aberfeldy, I realised what Burns meant when he wrote the poem "The Birks of Aberfeldy".

In the absence of any mandate, the Government propose to insist on going ahead with opting out and other important measures in the Bill. They have not consulted anyone in Scotland about whether to go ahead with these measures. There has been some consultation on how. It is no wonder that in Scotland there is anger among parents and parents' organisations, among teachers and teachers' organisations, among the Churches and among the education authorities. A combination of late consultation and haste in preparing a Bill is a guaranteed formula for frustration for those involved and bad law. My hon. Friends have extended discussion of the Bill in Committee because they are convinced that if it stays as drafted it will be bad law and harmful to children in Scotland.

On top of all that, the opting-out proposals for Scotland are worse than the ones already introduced in England. I do not know whether at the election the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was saying, "Yes, I would like opting out. The details of the opting out will be even worse and more stupid in Scotland than the ones proposed in England." The hon. Gentleman cannot have said that, because we did not know what the details were in England. In Scotland, special needs schools have not been exempted from these proposals; in England they are. The opting-out process in Scotland can be triggered by as few as 10 per cent. of parents, rather than 20 per cent. as in England. Under the Bill as drafted, the outcome of a decision on opting out can be decided by a simple majority on one ballot—although, following the cogent arguments mounted by my hon. Friends in Committee, the Government have, I understand, agreed to reconsider that aspect, and perhaps they will reach the stage arrived at in England. In England, schools with fewer than 300 pupils are exempted from opting out—not so in Scotland. Any suggestion that what is sauce for the English goose should be sauce for the Scottish gander is untenable, because the law as passed in England will not be applied to Scotland. The position will be worse in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's colleagues have admitted this point to him. He should be aware that an amendment was tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and other Front-Bench members of the Opposition team calling on the Government to include special schools within the provisions. I sought to sign that amendment, and found that it had been withdrawn, which was very sad. My hon. Friends and I were convinced of the excellence of the amendment, so I retabled it in my name. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the amendment to include special schools, which my hon. Friend the Minister accepted, was tabled by his hon. Friends.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman has underestimated my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), who has drawn my attention to one or two points that he thought that Conversative Members might mention. He drew my attention also to the fact that, as even the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has admitted, the amendment was withdrawn. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] Because it was not a sensible amendment. *[Laughter.]* I might add that the amendment which my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central concluded was not sensible was in due course almost automatically tabled by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes because he goes in for tabling that sort of thing, supporting such measures and getting them passed into law. I do not know what he is going on about.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on this point, because, as he knows, I have been deeply involved in this issue in Committee. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that the raucous laughter from Conservative Members showed that the debate on special schools appeared to be lost in a party political battle rather than being addressed as a clear issue affecting a small minority of our population? Those people have become deeply angry as they have read of the move by Conservative Members on that issue. Conservative Members will hear from concerned organisations as the Committee proceeds.

Mr. Dobson: I agree with much of what the hon. Lady has said. I cannot see why there is anything particularly silly, wrong or humiliating about an Opposition Member tabling an amendment and withdrawing it because he thought it inappropriate or wrong. After all, many Committee stages have involved a vast array of propositions that have been drafted by civil servants and approved by Ministers yet have been withdrawn because even Ministers accept that they are not a good idea. That is what the process is about. It certainly applies to amendments submitted by the Opposition as well.

One of the Government's other problems is that, with only five Scottish Tory Back Benchers, they have found it difficult to get people to serve on the Committee, especially as two of the five do not agree with opting out. The Bill has therefore been "augmented", if that is the right word—like the Augmented BBC Review Orchestra—by the addition of six English Tories. Having watched the Committee in action, I can say without fear of contradiction that the English element has not exactly helped the Government team to a win bonus. The formula so successfully applied by Rangers does not seem to work for the Tories.

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): Will the hon. Gentleman say just how long he spent in the Committee Room observing the proceedings?

Mr. Dobson: Long enough.

Three of the English augmenting MPs—the ones with close political ties with the Under-Secretary of State—represent what might be described as full-frontal Thatcherism in all its crude individualism——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Who were they?

Mr Dobson: I do not know whether I should name them, as it might endanger the other three. They say in the newspapers that the Prime Minister regularly meets a group of young Tories, including those three and the Under-Secretary of State. If, as is rumoured, she meets those hon. Members, I begin to understand her claim that there is no such thing as society. To describe this trio as philistine is to exaggerate their cultural aspirations. Throughout the Committee's proceedings they have displayed nothing but contempt for the people of Scotland and their institutions and for Scotland's elected representatives. I urge my hon. Friends from Scotland not to feel discriminated against, however, because these three Tories have exactly the same attitude to almost anything worthwhile in the rest of Britain, too.

Tories talk about a unitary Parliament and reject the idea of devolving power to a Scottish assembly. If they want to preserve the Union, that is all the more reason why they should treat the people of Scotland and their elected representatives with respect. The history of the Bill gives the lie to the Tory claim to be concerned about the people of Scotland and to regard the present arrangements as satisfactory.

The idea of allowing schools to opt out of local education is not just offensive in itself. It flies in the face of all that is best in the traditions of Scottish education and in the traditions of the whole nation. No nation on earth attaches more importance to education. As Burns wrote 202 years and one month ago, Scotland is

> "An ancient nation, famed afar
> For genius and learning high . . .
> Where every science—every noble art
> That can inform the mind or mend the heart
> Is known".

It is not just that Scots respect learning for its own sake, although they do. Education in Scotland has not been considered merely as something that benefits individuals and gives them opportunities, although it does. Education has been considered by Scottish people over the ages as something that enriches all and spreads out the

"pith o' sense and pride o' worth"

through a profoundly democratic people.

Except in a very few cases, the Scottish education system has been based on the local community, through schools and colleges catering for all. That was true even of the universities, which had more scholars from poor homes than those anywhere else in the world.

The best tradition of Scottish education has been good quality education for all, rejecting the elitism that has besmirched the English education tradition. That is why opting out is so reviled. To the people of Scotland, it is an alien idea. They fear it because it may produce alienation between one group of children and another and one group of parents and another. That is why the people of Scotland detest the Bill and why my hon. Friends fought so hard against it in Committee. It is why we oppose the guillotine motion tonight and why we shall continue to fight the proposals and we shall reverse them. The Bill flies in the face of all the traditions that are best in Scotland, and when one talks about the best in Scotland and the best in education one is talking about the best in the world.

8.26 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was uncharacteristically reluctant to give way to my hon. Friends. He did so only twice, and on each occasion he was clean bowled middle stump and gave clear evidence that, although he may have popped into the Committee for a minute or two, he had not read the Committee's proceedings with any attention to detail. It is anyway a change of Labour party policy to argue that the objectionable parts of the Bill are the parts that have not yet been discussed, rather than the parts that have been discussed.

Before I deal with the more general point, may I, perhaps unusually, solicit the support of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for my amendment on the chairmanship of the university courts?

Mr. Foulkes: I shall certainly consider that carefully. It sounds a great prospect. Those of us who fought hard for Prestwick are elated today at the prospect of great developments. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree. In the spirit of such cross-party co-operation, I shall certainly consider that amendment.

Mr. Stewart: I shall join the hon. Gentleman in urging the Government to go full speed ahead with the air-road route, which will help both Prestwick and my constituency.

I thought that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras would allege that the Labour party had spent so much time in Committee because they wished to go through the Bill line by line. That did not happen. What happened was a series of fits and starts. At some points, the Committee went extremely fast. Clause 15—a major clause dealing with ballots—for example, went through in about 15 minutes. I make no allegations about that. Other, purely technical, clauses took hours. The proceedings in Committee went badly wrong, first, because the Opposition were always determined that there should be a guillotine, and secondly because they were obsessed with one particular timetable—the timetable of the press.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), whom I do not criticise for not being present now, worked extremely hard and enthusiastically; I would not deny that. But he was absolutely obsessed with timing his great attacks with reference to the press. I happened to be the next to be called after one of his attacks on Tuesday 11 April. The hon. Gentleman did not listen to a word I said because he was busy talking to the press. I must say that one could understand the position that he adopted then. He had just moved three amendments in a major attack on the Government; one did not do what his press release said it would do; the second showed that he could not count; and the third reversed the amendment that the Labour party had originally tabled. Perhaps on that occasion, therefore, the hon. Gentleman could be excused for having to talk to the Press.

Mr. Leigh: Does my hon. Friend recall that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) made an error? He issued a press release one Wednesday saying that he proposed to move certain amendments on Thursday. Then he found to his horror that the English Members wanted to talk about religious education. He did not like the idea of people wanting to talk about the Bill, so in a fit of pique he ordered his troops to filibuster for the rest of the day. That meant that we did not reach the amendments described in the press release until the following Tuesday. What absurd behaviour that was.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That gives the lie to any claim that Labour Members were interested in debating the Bill line by line. They wanted to skip six clauses in no time at all, again because of the timetable of the press. There was clearly time wasting in Committee, and that is the principal justification for the guillotine. Hon. Members would have congratulated the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on his masterly performance of filibustering, but, this afternoon, the term became somewhat relative. It was still good to start on one group of amendments at 6.30 and finish at 10.45—admittedly with a dinner break in between—and discuss something that was not in the Bill. I refer to academic selection. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that term. I thought that he would do so 100 times, but he did not reach that figure. He did so 64 times, and the Chairman warned him about repetition.

The hon. Gentleman introduced the new technique of the silent filibuster. He stood and said absolutely nothing. He was firmly and fairly brought to order by the Chairman, who said:

"Order. Let us be clear. The hon. Member must not stand without speaking, because it cannot be recorded in *Hansard*. It cannot be said that during the day, the hon. Member has shown a lack of words, but, if he has now run out of words we may make progress."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 21 March 1989; c. 250.]

One of my uncontroversial amendments was brought forward by the Scottish Consumer Council. No Opposition Member signed my amendment, although they could have done so. I took three minutes to move the amendment. The Opposition indicated support. The Minister said that he would consider it. I said that I was content. The Opposition said that they supported my amendment. They were not content with the Minister's assurance. The Minister said that he would accept my amendment. The Opposition continued to filibuster until a closure was moved and agreed. That morning's proceedings were rightly described by the press—they managed to escape from the clutches of the hon. Member for Fife, Central for a moment or two—as degenerating into farce.

There was yet another example later. At 3.50 am on Tuesday 25 April, the hon. Member for Fife, Central moved an amendment. The Minister intervened. Did he say, "I will consider the amendment"? No. Did he say, "This is a good point, but the wording is technically flawed"? No. He said:

"I am happy to accept the hon. Gentleman's amendment, so perhaps we can move on".

The Labour Members who were present continued to talk. The Chairman said:

"I am in the Committee's hands, but I find it difficult to understand why amendment No. 154 cannot be dealt with quickly."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 25 April 1989; c. 1005, 1006.]

Still Labour Members talked, after the Minister had accepted their amendment, after the Chairman had demonstrated as strongly as possible that the Committee should move on. It was crystal clear to Conservative Members that a timetable motion was inevitable. I have had 10 years' experience of sitting on Committees, but Labour Members' behaviour was quite without precedent.

The Opposition were constantly in a muddle. They undertook that discussion on clause 28 would start at midday on 25 April. That debate was delayed for hours. I inform the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that the debate was delayed for hours because the Opposition were embarrassed that some of their amendments did not mean what they thought they meant. Any sensible Opposition would have admitted that and said, "It was a mistake; let us carry on." However, the Committee was treated to endless filibustering so that the Opposition could avoid the minor embarrassment of making that admission when the press were present instead of at 4 o'clock in the morning.

The Bill is an enabling measure—at least, the controversial parts of it are. Nothing happens in relation to opting out unless Scottish parents want it to happen. I do not criticise the Opposition's work rate. I do not know whether you are a reader of P. G. Wodehouse, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the hon. Member for Fife, Central reminds me of Rupert Baxter—the efficient Baxter of the flashing spectacles, who rushes around with mind-boggling energy and enthusiasm at all times. No one could criticise hon. Members' work rate or the way in which they tackle the measure.

The last two Scottish education Bills that the House has considered since 1979 were not guillotined. In many respects, they were much more radical than this one. The timetable motion is necessary for the orderly progress of the Bill. It has been made necessary by the absurd time-wasting tactics that have been used again and again by Labour Members on the Committee. There is no doubt that the guillotine will provide considerable relief for Opposition Front Bench Members.

8.35 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Mr. Dobson) as being bowled middle stump. As those of us who served on the Committee know, any fast bowling from Conservative Back-Bench Members was directed not at the Opposition but at the Minister. There were not a few occasions when his middle stump was removed by his hon. Friends who rebelled against him. They sufficiently embarrassed the Minister so that he tried to deny it profusely in the press later.

The hon. Member for Eastwood referred to the Opposition being reluctant to debate a set of amendments at the agreed time of 12 o'clock. The Government were in control of the timetable. They could easily have wound up the debate at any point in the twenty-six-and-a-half-hour sitting, but they refused to do so because they wanted to clock up hours, no doubt to justify this motion.

The hon. Members for Eastwood and for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) were keen. They said, "We are looking forward to the debate. We will embarrass the Labour Opposition." However, they did not speak because they were embarrassed about their claims, which

[Mr. John McAllion]

could not be substantiated. They backed away from the debate. The Opposition did not back away from the debate. We debated the issue when we had time.

Guillotine motions can be justified by democratically elected Governments, but it is a point of dispute whether the Government have been democratically elected in the context of Scottish legislation. It is true that Oppositions who have lost general elections and are worried about it sometimes do everything in their power to frustrate and delay Government legislation. One of the most potent weapons which an Opposition can wield is that of time. Oppositions can slow the parliamentary process. They can talk at great length on matters of little significance or importance which are disguised in the form of amendments. They can filibuster ad infinitum. They can seek line by line and word by word to pressure the Government into making concessions which they believe will improve the Bill, either by softening it or by changing its impact from that which the Government originally intended. It is strange that the manifestations of most of those tactics were deployed in Committee. They were deployed by Conservative Back-Bench Members on many occasions, in an attempt to justify the motion.

That method of parliamentary opposition can be legitimate, and all hon. Members would accept that. It can equally be legitimate for an elected Government to call a halt when they believe that the Opposition are simply indulging in time wasting and are no longer seriously debating suggestions for amending a Bill. A guillotine is legitimate only when the Government's parliamentary majority reflects an electoral majority in the country at large. When the Government's parliamentary majority reflects the will of the people who have elected them——

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McAllion: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He can make his own speech in his own time. I gave way to him time and again in Committee, and hon. Members were distracted by a lot of irrelevant nonsense.

Oppositions are always entitled to oppose any legislation brought forward by Government. They are not entitled to frustrate the will of the people by parliamentary manoeuvring. That is the only occasion when Governments are entitled to ensure the passage of legislation by introducing a guillotine motion. How does that principle apply to this motion and this piece of Government legislation?

Mr. Leigh: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Member can make his own speech in his own time. I will not give way to hon. Members who have tried to embarrass the people of Scotland time and again by the way in which they have behaved. The hon. Members who are trying to intervene repeatedly refused to give way to me in Committee.

The Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill applies exclusively to Scotland, affecting only the people of Scotland—the parents, pupils, teachers and ancillary staff of Scotland and nowhere else. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to ask whether there is any democratic legitimacy for this Bill, and any kind of support for it within Scotland.

I shall look at the evidence available on this matter. For example, what is the evidence on parliamentary elections? The most recent general election in Scotland saw a complete collapse of Tory support and a reduction of their number of representatives in this House by more than half. There were previously 21 Tory Members representing Scotland, whereas there are now only 10. The Conservatives are unable even to staff Scottish Standing Committees or, in fact, to form a Scottish Select Committee comprising Government Back Benchers from Scotland. Even the Government's Scottish Whip now comes from an English constituency, so bereft are the Government of Scottish Back-Bench support. In parliamentary terms, there is thus no democratic support in Scotland for the Bill, which will affect only the people of Scotland.

What about local expressions of support? For example, at the level of education authorities elected across Scotland by local electorates, there are nine regional councils and three island councils that act as such authorities. Not one is controlled by the Conservative party, since the regional elections of 1986. Not one of those bodies actually supports this Bill, which is being railroaded through the House. The Scottish Churches have registered their opposition to the Bill, as have the teachers' unions, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and even two of the Government's own Back Benchers from Scotland.

Thus the question must be asked: are the Government justified in assuming that the will of the Scottish people is being frustrated by parliamentary manoeuvring by the official Opposition? The only possible answer is that they are not justified in any way in that claim. The next question is whether the guillotine motion is justified. Again, the only answer can be that it is not. Of course, some Conservative Members will argue that what Scotland wants is completely immaterial, and that Scotland will get what the United Kingdom Parliament decrees it will get, no matter how tenuous the link between the United Kingdom parliamentary majority and the popular majority, whether that popular majority be at the Scottish or the United Kingdom level.

This is a particularly repulsive doctrine, because it is profoundly undemocratic and contemptuous of the will of the people of Scotland and indeed of people across the United Kingdom. Like all forms of tyranny, such as the poll tax, it always calls itself something else, masquerading behind the democratic facade. Sometimes it calls itself the concept of the unitary Parliament; at other times it describes itself as the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. However it describes itself, it is wholly and unashamedly opposed to the doctrine of popular sovereignty and the democratic principle that legislation can be introduced only with the democratic consent of the people to whom it applies. That is why a democratic Parliament would look to protect and secure the rights of the people against an elected dictatorship and not collude with the elected dictatorship, denying these very rights to the people of Scotland.

We have already heard the argument of the Member for Eastwood that the Bill is purely permissive, and that nothing has been imposed on anyone without their consent. He has said that only in schools where parents vote for the procedure will opting out actually be implemented. That is absolute hogwash, a spokescreen set up to confuse public opinion and get around the very

undemocratic nature of the business that the Government are now embarking on.

First, an option cannot be based on a minority of parents choosing to vote for self-governing status. The actual decision lies with the Secretary of State for Scotland. The parental ballot is purely indicative, and the Secretary of State can take it into account or refuse to take it into account—the decision rests with him whether or not the schools opt out of education authorities.

Secondly, schools which opt out do not do so in isolation. When they go, they take with them their current grants and capital allocation that otherwise would have gone to education authority schools. They therefore divert much-needed financial support away from education authority schools. When the self-governing schools go, they will forcibly take with them teachers and other staff in those schools who have no rights to choose to stay with their current employer, the education authority.

Thirdly, the Bill does not only deal with schools opting out, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said; the "etc." in the title covers a whole range of measures that have nothing to do with opting out. Further education colleges have been forcibly restructured to manipulate the majority of business representation on every college council. They have been forced into a more and more commercial and entrepreneurial direction, which the Government want but nobody else wants, least of all those in Scotland.

National testing for the primary sector of students aged between seven and 12 has been forcibly introduced into Scotland. Public funding for new private schools, called technology academies, has been forcibly introduced in Scotland. The abolition of the Scottish joint negotiating committee on further education has been forcibly introduced into Scotland. New forms of teacher appraisal and teacher dismissal have been imposed on teachers and employers alike in Scotland. There is nothing permissive about any of those measures. They have simply been imposed on Scotland undemocratically and against the wishes of those people.

This guillotine motion is therefore profoundly undemocratic, because it seeks to frustrate the real will of the Scottish people, as does the Bill itself. It should be resisted by any true democrats in this House.

We have been accused of organising a filibuster. What we have simply tried to do is examine the Bill in detail, exploring fully the wide ramifications and implications of the measure as it will affect the people of Scotland. We have done that in respect of part I, clauses 1 to 47, over the past 12 days in Committee. We are now denied the opportunity to do that on a similar basis in respect of parts II and III and clauses 48 to 72 because debate is to be stifled and examination curtailed by a Government timetable.

I look to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes particularly to support the Opposition in trying to defeat this guillotine motion. He said in Committee:

"I hope that the Committee will take the opportunity to sit for as long as is necessary for those such as myself who have yet to be persuaded by Opposition amendments. It is essential that we have a long and leisurely Committee."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 25 April 1989, c. 18.]

I ask the hon. Gentleman whether he thinks that parts II and III of the Bill will be given sufficient time, when the timetable motion allows only five days to cover clauses 48 to 72 and the schedules.

Mr. Michael Brown: Indeed I said that, because I was assuming that the Labour Opposition would not waste time. I was assuming that they would take the debate seriously and would not then spend hours and hours debating an amendment when my hon. Friend the Minister said that he was prepared to consider it. At the point when Labour Members then conducted a filibuster, after my hon. Friend had said that he was willing to consider the amendment, it was clear that only a guillotine motion would solve the problem for the Opposition.

Mr. McAllion: It is difficult to take any admonition from the hon. Gentleman. At one point in Committee, he actually threatened myself and other Scottish Members of the Committee. He said that if we did not shut up he would make sure that concessions given by the Minister would be defeated by the Back Benches. It is hardly consistent with democratic debates for a Scottish Member to be threatened by an English Member that a Scottish Bill will not be amended as Scottish Members want it amended because he is being kept out of bed. That is intolerable.

It is important that we spend as much time considering the next two parts of the Bill as we spent on the first part. When we spent 12 days discussing that, we found out the Minister's real intentions on several points. On 16 March, at column 119, the Minister said that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland would not consent to the introduction of general academic selection. However, much later, on 18 April at column 790, the same Minister confirmed that, if self-governing schools could secure the endorsement of the Secretary of State for Scotland, they could introduce general academic selection. Something that was not on at the beginning of the Committee, suddenly became on much later when the Minister's defences were down and he let it slip. The purpose of our deliberations in Committee is to find out such things.

At column 754, the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) stated:

"I fully support the right of parents to opt for schools whose admissions policy is based on academic selection."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 18 April 1989; c. 754.]

At column 783, the Minister congratulated his hon. Friend the Member for Hexham on an excellent speech. That was the same Minister who said that he would not allow general academic selection to be introduced via this Bill. It is important to spend a long time in Committee deliberations because, when the Minister makes mistakes, we find out what the Government's real intentions have been all along.

The Government's conduct of the Bill in Committee has been as provocative as it has been contemptuous of Scottish opinion. The Government's Back Benches were packed by extremist ideologues of the No Turning Back group. They displayed an obsessive interest in the technicalities of tabling amendments, but no interest whatsoever in how the Bill may affect Scottish people and the pupils who attend Scottish schools. However, in defence of some the Government's Back Bench members of that Committee, I must say that the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) was less extreme than some of his hon. Friends. He at least has a Scottish auntie and claimed that his grandfather came from Fife, so there must be some good things about some Tory Members on that Committee.

[Mr. McAllion]

As the Committee has gone on, it has become obvious that the Government's Back Benchers have become more and more irritated by debates on what the Bill would mean for Scottish schools and that they have finally let their Minister know in no uncertain terms that they want out of the Committee and back to their own obsessions. If any hon. Member doubts the influence of Conservative Back Benchers over their Ministers, I refer them to the revolt that took place in Committee when Conservative Members defeated what the Minister intended to achieve. The Chairman had to suspend the Committee for five minutes to allow the Minister to try to quell his Back Bench rebellion so that he could try to restore some order to the Committee.

It is also true that the Minister now wants out of the Committee, so that he can go to the Tory party conference in Perth on 10 May and announce what he will call the great parliamentary success of getting the Bill through Committee. We have this guillotine motion for no other reason than that the hon. Member for Stirling wants to trot along to Perth to boast to the ladies with blue rinses and flowery hats about his great prowess in Parliament.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On a fairly simple point, surely the hon. Gentleman has read the terms of the guillotine motion? It is absolutely clear even at a cursory glance that the Committee will sit well after 10 May.

Mr. McAllion: I have read it, but the Minister has already given the game away. He will claim at Perth on 10 May that the most contentious part of the Bill has already completed its Committee stage because clauses 1 to 47 are now through. The Minister has already made that claim in Committee, and I have no doubt that he will make exactly the same claim when he speaks to the Tory ladies in Perth.

The House should not give in to the yowling of Conservative Members who are the equivalent of Parliamentary yobs. This House owes it to the people of Scotland to act responsibly on this motion.

Although I have many disagreements with Mr. Paul Scott, who recently became the rector of Dundee university—he is a member of the Scottish National party—I agree with some of the analyses in his rectorial address about the nature of the Government and the kinds of measure that we are now dealing with. He said:

"They would like to confine our schools and universities, except for a privileged minority who can pay for something better, to the subjects which seem to have a direct commercial utility. They call this 'enterprise culture'. There is another, more traditional and more appropriate name; it is barbarism."

Mr. Scott is absolutely right to describe what the Government are trying to do to Scottish education as "barbarism". He continued:

"It is now impossible to talk about education without talking in political terms. Like everything else, education is under political attack and can only be defended by political means."

The Government, and the Minister in particular, are responsible for reducing Scottish education to that sorry state.

Those Conservative Members who still represent Scotland will have to pay the political price for the way in which they are legislating on education for Scotland. They will pay the same price in 1991 that their ex-hon. Friends paid in 1987 over the poll tax. While no one in Scotland looks forward to the Bill's enactment, everyone in Scotland is looking forward to 1991, to a Tory-free Scotland and to a Labour Government delivering a Scottish Parliament that will decide for the Scots how Scottish education should be run.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): At least 10 hon. Members seem to be trying to catch my eye, and as the debate must conclude at 10 minutes to 11 o'clock, unless hon. Members exercise some restraint, I am afraid that some will be disappointed. I call Mr. Bill Walker.

8.55 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I rise with some sadness because one entered the Committee on the understanding that the Labour party had staffed it with some of its brighter, more intelligent and more articulate Members. I do not argue that they are brighter or that they are more articulate. They are certainly politicians who, given a fair wind, could go a long way because they have the qualities that should and could have produced the kind of debate in Committee that would have been testing and trying for the Government. However, like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) in the 10 years that I have been a Member of the House, I have never witnessed such a collection of talented individuals so badly managed, and so badly led. From one hour to the next they did not appear to have any tactic that made sense, other than initially to ensure that their business was in keeping with what the press would require.

Mr. McAllion *rose*—

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute because I do not want to end my sad speech without first saying clearly that I believe that if the Labour party had had one old hand on the Committee he would have made sure that the Committee conducted itself in a way that made the maximum use of the time available.

Mr. McAllion: I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that he thought the performance of the Labour Opposition on the Committee was so poor because his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has told me that this was the best Committee on which he has served because of the high standard of debate from both sides. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is out of step with his right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Walker: I do not withdraw anything that I have said. Anyone who wants to read the reports of the conduct of our Committee will discover that an astonishing new strategy—I am not sure what to call it—was adopted by the Opposition. It certainly was a novel approach. The Opposition tabled amendments in order to speak and vote against them. That is novel and I have never read of such an approach being adopted in the history of Parliament. I have never come across it in the 10 years in which I have served on Committees.

Mr. Foulkes: How can the hon. Gentleman give such a detailed assessment of what happened in Committee, given that each time I visited that Committee he was sitting there with ear muffs on?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has made the same mistake as the Chairman, the first time that I put them on.

If the hon. Gentleman made any attempt to understand what goes on in this place he would know that aids are issued on the Committee corridor for those who have difficulty hearing because of background noise, or whatever. I made use of that equipment and tonight the hon. Gentleman has again shown how he constantly jumps in without researching to discover the evidence.

Mr. Leigh: I hope that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will withdraw his unnecessary remark. Before my hon. Friend develops his speech, will he deal with a constitutional point which was raised at length by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) who refused to give way? If he had given way I would have reminded him not only of his tactics in Committee and when he voted on entirely English legislation, but of when the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) moved the famous five guillotine motions in one day. He got them through the House only because of the preponderance of Scottish Members. The constitutional argument advanced by the hon. Member for Dundee, East is entirely false.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend is correct. I intended to touch on that matter, as it is important.

I believe that some members of the Opposition support the unitary Parliament. Certainly my remarks do not reflect in any way on the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). His stance on the Union and the unitary Parliament shows that he should not be criticised. Some of his hon. Friends, however, appear to support the unitary Parliament when it suits them and on other occasions to make an issue about whether something has a mandate.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way in a moment.

The argument advanced by the hon. Member for Dundee, East is amusing. His argument is a bit like the conduct of the Committee—it was so unprofessional as to be amusing. At great length, the hon. Member for Dundee, East spoke about mandates and drew attention to the fact that English Members were serving on the Committee. However, every time there was a Division in Committee Room 9—dealing with English legislation—he disappeared. He was properly carrying out his duties and I do not argue with that. On many occasions I have had to serve on two Committees—on too many occasions—but the hon. Member for Dundee, East cannot deny that he voted on purely English matters when he had not heard the debate. That was in order and was proper, but I do not believe that it was consistent to come back to our Committee Room to argue that it was somehow wrong for Conservative Members to vote on Scottish legislation, especially as he had voted on English legislation.

Mr. McAllion *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way in a moment. The hon. Gentleman is too impetuous, probably because he is so vulnerable about this.

It is also important to remember that, in the past, the Labour party has made substantial changes that affect Scotland, England and Wales, on a majority of one. It did not have anything remotely like a majority in England.

Mr. McAllion: Perhaps I can explain the way in which I square the fact that I voted on English legislation with my claim that the House should recognise the desire of the Scottish people for an assembly. I do not control the nature of the United Kingdom Parliament. The Government control that and they can introduce legislation to reform it. As long as I am a member of the unitary Parliament I shall vote on all the legislation that comes through Parliament. The overwhelming majority of the Scottish people have said that they want their own Scottish Parliament. If the Government were democratic they would give them that Parliament and it would decide its own education policies. The Government have refused to listen to the Scottish people, and I continue to draw attention to that fact.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has been in this place long enough to know that if he talks to the usual channels, to his Whips, and tells them that, on a matter of principle, he does not want to serve on a particular Bill where he may be required to vote in Divisions having not heard the argument, I am sure that they would ensure——

Mr. McAllion: I was a member of the Committee.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman was not present in the Committee considering the English legislation. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. I am prepared to support people who argue on matters of principle. I have always believed that one should give credit where credit is due. That is why I wanted to make it clear that the hon. Member for Garscadden is consistent. He may have difficulties with some of his hon. Friends, but I believe one day he wants to sit on the Treasury Bench. That is not an ambition of which one should be critical. It is a fine ambition. The hon. Gentleman wants to sit on the Treasury Bench in a unitary Parliament, as do many other Labour Front Bench spokesmen from Scotland. They cannot argue against us using Members from other constituencies, as we do properly, to serve on our Committees.

Mr. McKelvey: The hon. Gentleman is not consistent. I thought that I heard him say earlier that he was elected as an individual, that he had made it clear that he wanted schools in Tayside, North to have the opportunity to opt out, and that that gave him grounds to argue legitimately for his point of view. I have sympathy with that point of view. If the people of Tayside, North, want to do a UDI on opting out, it is an argument that he can defend. At the same time a majority of Labour Members were returned in Scotland and it was not in the Conservative manifesto at any time that Scottish schools could opt out; indeed, when the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) asked the Tory office that very question, he was assured that opting out would not be an option for Scotland. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) cannot have it all ways.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has picked on the wrong Member. He should know from my record here that the Front Bench and the Whips know that they cannot dragoon the hon. Member for Tayside, North to act in a way that he believes wrong. My record in the House bears that out. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to have that kind of debate, he should pick on someone else.

[Mr. Walker]

Another reason why we need the guillotine motion is the saga of clause 28 on which Labour Members kept talking. They would not have done that if they had been managed properly. Sadly for the Labour party, Strathclyde regional council made a decision that was contrary to the high-flown and long speeches that we had been listening to from Labour Members. It is all on the record. Hon. Members were criticising not just the Bill but the legislation that established the school boards. Then Strathclyde regional council came out with something that went further. The Labour Members could not give an answer, so to save face they kept talking for hours while they waited for the channels, whatever they are, to give them a briefing. At intervals of 15 to 20 minutes we asked them for their view. As we know, about 10 minutes before the Committee was due to rise, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was able to make a statement. However, that was some hours after he had been asked the original question about the position of Strathclyde. That showed clearly the problems that Labour Members were facing.

If there is one reason why the motion should be accepted and proceedings on the Bill should be guillotined, it is the example that we had this afternoon of how the business of the House can be held up. Let me treat the House to an extract from a discussion that took place on Radio Scotland. It tells us a lot. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dundee, East is not in the Chamber. This is what he said about the Bill that we are discussing:

"What I would argue is that when it comes back for its Report stage, which is an open-ended stage in Parliament, we make every effort to ensure that that debate goes on for as long as it takes and if that means going through the night and into the next day and disrupting the next day's business, then we do that".

Opposition Members have been condemned by the voice of the hon. Member for Dundee, East telling the whole of Scotland why we require a guillotine.

If the hon. Member for Garscadden had been able to discipline his troops properly, perhaps it would not have been Labour Members who kept the debate going all night. The example we have seen this afternoon shows clearly that the other Opposition parties are prepared to do that. That, more than anything, is why we need the motion to succeed this evening.

I shall bring my remarks to a conclusion because I understand that a number of hon. Members wish to speak. I could speak for much longer——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall not give way because I have given way a number of times and many Opposition Members, quite properly, want to speak. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman a number of times.

I also found interesting during the debate the many press releases that were put out by the Opposition. They will live to regret doing so in the years ahead. I found it interesting that the hon. Member for Garscadden, for whom I have much respect——

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman should not keep saying that. He should withdraw that disgraceful slur——

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman continually to praise my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden? It will do my hon. Friend unending harm at home in his constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. This is a short debate and we should do better to get on with it.

Mr. Walker: I do not doubt the integrity of the hon. Member for Garscadden. I do not agree with his policies or what he is trying to achieve within the Labour party, Scotland and the United Kingdom. However, I do not deny his right to do that if he wishes and I do not want anyone to think that I doubt his integrity, because I do not.

I find it sad and disappointing that the only case that the hon. Member for Garscadden can make against the Government is to say that the Tory Benches have been packed with an unpleasant collection of Right-wing, hard-line extremists. If that is a description of me, the hon. Gentleman will know that it will probably increase my majority in Tayside, North. It will not damage it, because my constituents do not like extreme language such as we have heard, not from the hon. Member for Garscadden, but certainly from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars)—who has debased parliamentary activity and has described hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Garscadden, in a way that damages the standing of hon. Members and will not do his party any good.

I invite the hon. Member for Govan to come to Tayside, North every week and make speeches such as the one he has delivered about the hon. Member for Garscadden. He presents an extremist view. I have never done so, although I never deny my views. I never attack hon. Members in such a personal and hideous way. It is time that we got down to the serious business of debating the issues, instead of launching personal attacks against individuals.

9.13 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I have found this an interesting debate. Although I read the Committee debates in the *Official Report*, it was helpful to hear, through the oral evidence tonight, exactly what went on in Committee.

I shall touch on two main points: the use of the guillotine, and the important clauses and amendments, the discussion of which will be either severely curtailed or prevented altogether. I understand that in a debate on a guillotine the Minister often prefaces his remarks with the words, "I move this motion to curtail debate on a Bill which fully honours our election commitment." The Minister has been unable to do that today because the Bill will bring about a fundamental change in the Scottish education system, of which there was no hint in the election manifesto and no word during the General Election. Quite the contrary: we were assured that Scotland would not choose the opting-out route.

We are debating the allocation of time for a Bill that should not be discussed here at all, either in Committee or on the Floor of the House. It is a matter for deliberation by Scots for Scots in Scotland; it is the business of no one else. Tragically, however, as an article in *The Scotsman* yesterday pointed out,

"The Scots have their own education system but have no way of deciding what happens to it."

As for the purely mechanical question of procedure, of course I understand that all Governments use the

guillotine. It is, however, a crude and inept weapon, which I believe should be scapped as part of the general reforms in the House that many of us would like—including an end to the ridiculous all-night sittings.

It is my belief and that of my party that agreement should be reached at the beginning of a Bill on the allocation of time. How much better it would be if we dealt with such matters in a more structured and sensible manner, with proper timetabling that would ensure adequate scrutiny of all parts of a Bill. Instead, we are being asked halfway through to shorten consideration of a Bill that is highly contentious and is being pushed through against the wishes of the Scottish people and the majority of their elected representatives. So much for democracy.

As I recall, a guillotine motion was introduced for the poll tax Bill, and shortly thereafter the Tories lost 11 seats in Scotland. Perhaps this debate heralds the loss of the last 10.

How can a Bill with such potentially far-reaching implications for Scotland's education system be given the necessary scrutiny and elucidation when it is being handled by a Committee with English Conservative Members, and steamrollered by a Government with minimal sensitivity to Scotland's education needs? Some clauses have not yet been covered, and are now in danger of not being covered properly.

I believe that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) mentioned the clause dealing with college councils and the balance of their membership. If there is a guillotine, what guarantee is there that a proper discussion can be held about the composition of such councils? It is extremely important for representatives of college management, staff and students to be accorded proper status on them. They should surely be given more than the derisory influence provided by clause 48—

"not more than one fifth".

of the membership. We should also have a chance to discuss the merits of giving "not less than half" the number of representatives to employer organisations: while the needs and interests of local employers should be reflected, colleges must also have wider goals in order best to serve their students and the areas in which they are located.

Let me touch briefly on a matter that has caused deep affront to the Scottish people—the chairing of university courts as dealt with in schedule 10. Time must be given for us to discuss such a major change as the proposed abolition of the right of university rectors to chair meetings of the courts, which represents an attempt to undermine a long-standing constitutional tradition—dating, I believe, from 1889—and erodes the rights of students and staff in the governing of the universities. That is symptomatic of a wider assault on students' rights—the poll tax and grant cuts—and of a general indifference to Scotland's unique education system which has caused deep offence in Scotland.

Knowing the Government's ideology, I can understand that they are quite happy to push through legislation which was not contained in the Conservative party manifesto and to do so without the consent of the people for whom they are legislating. I am puzzled by the fact that Scottish Office Ministers are prepared to collude, as the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) has already said, in this. I believe that that demonstrates a misunderstanding of the values and beliefs of the Scottish people which I find quite staggering.

Why are Scottish Office Ministers behaving like this? What motivates a Scottish Office Minister? The most curious and intriguing of the Scottish Office Ministers is the Minister responsible for education. If one knew him other than as a Minister on the other side of the Dispatch Box, it might be easier to understand what makes him tick. What are his roots? Does he know Scotland and its people? Does he have a sense of history? Is Scotland important to him? It would be nice to hear from the Minister later. Perhaps he can answer my questions then. I do not know anything about him and would like to hear what he really believes.

I believe that a London Government—any London Government—are Scotland's gaolers. Until we can throw off their stranglehold and are allowed to look after our home and domestic affairs through our own Scottish Parliament, we will continue to be subjected to Bills like the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill which are alien to our instincts and aspirations.

9.22 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): This guillotine motion is very important for the Labour party. It is necessary to put Labour Members out of their misery. I was looking forward very much to serving on the very important Standing Committee on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill and I was grateful to the Committee of Selection when it nominated me to serve on that Committee.

I was looking forward to sharing a number of hours with the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish). I did not know him very well, but I had met him socially before. As I explained to the Standing Committee, the hon. Gentleman and his delightful wife and I shared a weekend together at the Gleneagles hotel last year. I was looking forward very much to listening to him in his political context as the shadow spokesman leading for the Opposition on this Bill.

I was very sorry that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was not a member of the Committee. I was delighted to see that the Government took the Bill so seriously that, in addition to the Minister responsible for education at the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State, the Minister of State and the full Scottish Office team turned out. The Opposition considered the Bill to be so important that they did not even include the main shadow spokesman for Scottish affairs on the Committee. Indeed, the only Opposition Members from Scotland on the Committee were Members who were elected to the House in 1987. They are delightful characters and they made interesting if very lengthy speeches. However, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) publicly admitted to the House earlier that the Opposition had fielded a weak team—they may have been generous and gentle—of new hon. Members who were at sixes and sevens.

I am reminded of the famous press release to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) drew attention in Committee. That press release was issued by the Labour party to *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, stating that Labour Members would debate a certain clause at a certain time in Committee. At the bottom of that press release was the special code "6/7" —which makes it clear that the Opposition were at sixes and sevens. They were tabling amendments one day and

[Mr. Michael Brown]

withdrawing them the next. When I tabled those selfsame amendments because I was convinced of their excellence, Labour Members voted against them.

A couple of weeks ago, the Opposition tabled a very interesting amendment. I went along and signed that amendment so that the Opposition could not withdraw it.

Mr. McAllion: Grow up.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) should tell those of his hon. Friends who represented his interests on the Committee that they should grow up. They need to learn that when they table amendments, those amendments are not their property but the property of the Committee. If I am so inspired by those interesting amendments that I support them, Opposition Members must think that through. They table amendments to which they speak at great length and then withdraw them—and then do not like it because I want to vote for their amendments.

There were occasions on which my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for Scottish education matters was prepared to accept some amendments. However, the Opposition glibly concluded the debate by saying that those amendments were a mistake. Whenever we go into a Standing Committee in future, perhaps we may have a note against every single Opposition amendment saying, "This is a serious amendment," or, "We hope and pray that the Government do not accept this amendment," or, "We pray that the Minister will not accept the amendment."

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) will recall that he entered the House at the same time I did.

Mr. Brown: Yes—10 years ago tonight.

Mr. Foulkes: I have sat through the debate as a Scottish Member to make some assessments. The hon. Gentleman comments on the capacities and abilities of certain of my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I make the judgment that my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) speaks with more wisdom, intelligence and ability after only two years in the House than the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes—who is treating the debate in a facile and facetious manner, like a little schoolgirl instead of as an hon. Member of the House.

Mr. Brown: Is it facetious when my hon. Friends take Standing Committee debates seriously, consider all the Opposition amendments, and decide to support them and to persuade my hon. Friend the Minister to accept them? Is it facile when those of my hon. Friends serving on the Committee support amendments that have been tabled by the Opposition? Is it facile of me to put my name to Opposition amendments? If so, they must be very facile amendments.

The best thing that the House can do is to put the Opposition Members who sat on that Committee out of their misery. They, more than anybody else, need the guillotine. If anyone has brought the proceedings of that Standing Committee into disrepute in the eyes of the Scottish people it is those hon. Members.

English Members who were nominated to serve on the Committee were well aware of the possibility that their membership would be criticised. Scottish Opposition Members even went to the extent of issuing a press release before the Committee even sat for the first time, saying how disgraceful it was that English Members had been put on the Scottish Standing Committee considering the Bill. They expected us to sit there and get on with our constituency correspondence. They expected, they hoped, and when the Committee got going they prayed, that we would sit there silently. But we did not. We spoke in nearly every debate on nearly every group of amendments on nearly every clause stand part debate.

The other day we had an interesting clause stand part debate. The hon. Member for Dundee, East spoke at very great length on clause 29. He said how important it was that the clause be amended. He spoke for hours on how important it was not to pass clause 29 because it needed amendments. I then discovered that not a single amendment to clause 29 had been tabled by any Opposition Member. Only one amendment had been tabled and that was in the name of my hon. Friend the Minister.

You are getting the picture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will have noticed that my hon. Friends were being pilloried by the hon. Member for Garscadden as being the most objectionable and thoroughly obscene Members of the House. You know me better than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know that I and my hon. Friends take our duties seriously.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Before my hon. Friend gets too excited, will he do the House a service? The hon. Lady, the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) said that the Minister knew nothing about the history of Scotland. Will my hon. Friend be good enough to ask her on my behalf if she can explain why Scotland Yard is so called?

Mr. Brown: I might be straining your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I followed my hon. and learned Friend down that road. If he catches your eye I am sure that he will invite the hon. Lady to intervene on his speech.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) piloted the excellent Bill through the Standing Committee so well. I know my hon. Friend the Minister very well. I have had the pleasure of knowing him and his political philosophy for many years. Ten years ago today, his wife became my constituency secretary, and for four years I got to know her and my hon. Friend very well. He is a conviction politician who has been a moderate, meek and mild Minister throughout the Standing Committee. He has accepted amendments when he has been convinced of their arguments, so much so that sometimes he was in the extraordinary position of recommending an Opposition amendment, wanting us to vote for that amendment and then finding that the Opposition had withdrawn it.

We had many debates that went on for hours because the Opposition were frightened, having issued those ridiculous press releases well in advance and discovered that all the amendments to which they planned to speak were wholly out of order or did not mean what they had meant them to mean. They then had to speak and filibuster against themselves and against their own amendments. They had to filibuster through the night to make sure that

reporters from the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* were not in the press gallery when those embarrassing debates were to occur.

I know that Labour Members, more than any other hon. Members on the Standing Committee, need the guillotine. From the report I read in *The Scotsman* I understand that there was an opportunity for the Bill to pass to the Floor of the House on Third Reading and Report without the need for a guillotine. I read in *The Scotsman* that something like 60 hours had been offered to the Opposition. I do not know whether that is true, but if it is, it was plainly rejected because the Opposition do not want any more debate on the Bill. I certainly understand why.

The guillotine would be doing the Opposition spokesman for Scotland, the hon. Member for Garscadden, who seems to have left the Chamber, a great favour. If the Labour party needs any guidance from English Members looking from the outside at the future of the Labour party, if they ever have a Bill that affects only Scotland they should make sure that one or two Opposition Members on the Committee have been in the House for a little while. Conservative Members will not be treated with contempt. We will not be told that we cannot vote for an amendment or that we are being puerile or facile because we take seriously amendments tabled by the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East was running in and out of the Committee all the time. The policeman would shout—this will be the epitaph of the Committee—outside our door, "Division in Room 9." Often the hon. Gentleman would be in the middle of his speech, and we would have to make points of order so that he could nip off and vote. The hon. Member for Garscadden laughs, but he should have been on the Committee and seen the shambles and nonsense being perpetrated by those representing his interests. They did him a grave disservice.

Mr. McAllion: Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the allegation that he had to make a point of order to allow me to vote in Room 9? That never once happened, and if the hon. Member is an honourable Member he will withdraw that allegation.

Mr. Brown: I made a point of order drawing the attention of the Chairman of the Committee to the fact that there was a Division in Room 9 and that the hon. Gentleman was on his feet. I suggested to the Chairman that we might suspend the Committee. The hon. Gentleman seemed quite prepared to nip down the corridor and vote on solely English legislation without having heard a single word of the debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend recollect that on one occasion the Committee had to wait a considerable time for the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) to return from Committee Room 9—so much so that I raised the matter with Mr. Speaker. I said that I had often served on Committees and wanted the same degree of tolerance.

Mr. Brown: I remember my hon. Friend making that point.

The Bill must be guillotined so that we can have orderly debates in the future without Labour Members moving amendments, suddenly realising that they strengthen the Bill and filibustering so that the press cannot cover their embarrassments. We should be doing the House, and certainly the Labour party, a great favour by passing the motion.

9.36 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The speech of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) confirmed everything that we have always known about him and everything that we have always known about the motivation of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). The clear link and alliance between the hon. Member for Stirling and the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes confirms everything that my hon. Friends have said about what lies behind this legislation. The only pity is that, because of the antics of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) earlier this afternoon, the Scottish press, about which we have heard much so far, did not hear the contribution that has just been made by one of the English intruders on the Scottish Committee.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend has been an hon. Member longer than me by a week or two. Will he say what the intervention of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) achieved? It seemed to me to be a total damp squib.

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not know whether it was a damp squib, but the hon. Member for Govan was on an ego trip. It will ensure that he gets much press coverage, which might irritate the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), who are seeing through the rest of the work of the day. His contribution means that the debate on the substance of this guillotine motion is being held late at night, so the press will not hear it and it will not be reported in Scotland. I dare say that that was part of his objective.

The Bill is yet another unwanted and unwarranted intrusion into the Scottish education system. Before an hon. Member points it out, I admit that, in common with the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes, I was educated in England. Having endured the English education system, or one aspect of it, I believe that it is doubly important to protect all that is best in the Scottish system.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is wrong. He was educated in England; the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) went to school in England.

Mr. Home Robertson: I shall leave it to the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to consider that intervention.

The Government cannot complain about the fact that elected representatives of the Scottish majority are using every means at their disposal to prevent the disruption of our children's education. This matter is far too important to be left to the unfettered malice of the hon. Member for Stirling. That is the only way of describing the legislation. It was not in the Conservative manifesto. I suppose that, by some convoluted logic, the Conservatives could say that, because it was not in their manifesto and because they were resoundingly defeated in Scotland on that manifesto, they were entitled to legislate in that way. That is the way in which those people operate. There can be no justification for this imposition on our people.

[Mr. Home Robertson]

Opting out seems to be the Bill's theme. We know that the hon. Member for Stirling has already in a sense opted out with his family. I understand that members of his family are being educated at a private school in my constituency.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As someone who was educated in a private school in England, does the hon. Gentleman take the view that his parents thought that its purpose was to disrupt his education or that it was to obtain it?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is that relevant?

Mr. Home Robertson: I doubt whether it is relevant to the timetable motion. What I and my constituents hear about most is how my children and my constituents' children will be educated in Scotland. That is the serious issue to which the House should address itself, and which it clearly is not addressing.

Those of us who want the Scottish education system to develop on the well-proven pattern of partnership between teachers, parents and local authorities—and, until comparatively recently, the Scottish Education Department—want that system to continue to flourish. We deplore the fact that the Under-Secretary of State responsible for the Scottish education department seems to be more interested in playing a politically motivated cat-and-mouse game with education in Scotland. His objective appears to be to foster constant friction between parents, the teaching professions and local education authorities. He is trying to foster highly motivated cliques seeking to indulge in prejudices of one kind or another and to impose them on school boards in the opting-out procedure.

If the Bill is another outrageous imposition on our children, the Committee which is supposed to scrutinise it is a travesty, as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has confirmed by his intervention. In the last Session the hon. Members for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) and for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) were brought in to top up the Standing Committee on the Bill to regenerate private landlordism in Scotland. The Government amended Standing Orders exactly one year ago tonight to make it possible to pack Scottish Standing Committees with impunity. That is what has happened to this Standing Committee. Significantly —the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) skated over this point—although the Government have been prepared to set up any number of Committees to impose alien legislation on Scotland, the one body which they will not set up and on which the hon. Member for Tayside, North is not prepared to serve is a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to scrutinise the work of the Scottish Office. The Government want it both ways.

The Standing Committee is plainly not composed in a way that is conducive to proper consideration of a Scottish Bill. For a start, the party that got just 24 per cent. of the votes in Scotland—I suspect that it would be below 20 per cent. by now—has about 60 per cent. of the seats on the Committee. Conservative Members are over-represented by a factor of three. They have an overall majority of four in a Committee of 22.

Obviously there are not enough Scottish Tories to man the Committee, so it has been packed with people who would be regarded anywhere in Scotland as complete aliens. These people are not just Tories; they are hard-line Thatcher freaks. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) is happy to accept that accolade. As well as the hon. Gentleman there are the hon. Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Brigg and Cleethorpes, for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), for Hexham (Mr. Amos) and for Penrith and The Border—six English Tory Members.

Do any of them have children at schools in Scotland? Do any of them have constituents at local authority schools? [Hon. Members: "No, at Fettes."] Fettes, perhaps. We have already established that the Under-Secretary has children at a private school in my constituency, but we shall skate over that. It is a travesty that these people should determine the future of education for my children and those of my hon. Friends. It is highly offensive to the nation of Scotland that a Committee constituted in this way should determine policy on the future of education for our children and exclude those of us with a direct interest in these matters.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Would my hon. Friend believe that, early in the proceedings of the Committee, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) informed us that his qualification for serving on the Committee was that he was the son of a border farmer's daughter?

Mr. Home Robertson: That sounds rather convoluted. Perhaps it will give the House some idea of the level of debate that took place in Committee. It is self-evident that these people cannot contribute anything significant.

The Committee was not designed to consider a Scottish education Bill. It was deliberately selected to force any measure on to the statute book and to provoke the maximum outrage in the process. Clearly it is succeeding only too well on both counts.

Like a number of my hon. Friends who have spoken I have sat in on some of the debates and watched the work being put in by my hon. Friends who are members of the Standing Committee. I pay tribute to their hard work and dogged determination in the face of provocation of the kind that we have heard tonight. I have every sympathy with my hon. Friends, having endured similar treatment on the poll tax Bill Committee, the Housing (Scotland) Bill Committee and many others.

One of the most sickening aspects of this business is the highly effective management of the news coverage applied by the Scottish Office and its press officers, one of whom —Alex Paget, I think—went on to work as press officer for the Conservative party in Scotland until he recognised that he was on a hiding to nothing and jacked that in, too.

The Conservative party, the Government and Scottish Office civil servants know that they are on impossible ground when it comes to the substance of the Bill, so, in accordance with the worst traditions of opting out in the school playground, they side-step the issues and go for the personalities. As we have heard this evening, their line is that Opposition Members are doing a bad job because they are having no impact on the Bill. How could they have any impact on the Bill when they are outnumbered on the Committee and when the Government have built in a majority of apparatchiks like the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to ensure that anything that they want to

put through goes through on the nod? That is a spurious and unreasonable argument for the Scottish Office press office to advance.

Several Lobby correspondents faithfully churn out the Scottish Office line and produce knocking copy against the majority opposition in Scotland. It is easy for them to do that. I suppose that it is also prudent if they hope to continue to be fed material by the Scottish Office. But at a time of constitutional crisis in Scotland it is incumbent on the Scottish press to reflect its duty to tell the truth and to explain the background to the truth so that people in Scotland know what is going on in this Parliament—how their business is being abused and their education and children are being put in jeopardy by Bills such as this.

Then we have the greatest allies of the Conservative party in Scotland—the Scottish National party. Last Thursday at business questions I referred to the new alliance between the hon. Members for Moray and for Brigg and Cleethorpes—apparently now sealed with a bottle of champagne. If that is disruption of Scottish business and of the Tory minority Government in Scotland, I suspect that the Government will welcome all the disruption that they can possibly get.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to speak presently. Her hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) detained the House for four hours this afternoon. We have had enough self-indulgence.

Mrs. Ewing: I have no intention of trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is trying to turn a sip into a magnum. No doubt he thinks that the offer of shaving foam to his Friends was just a good clean plot. As he is spending a great deal of time attacking the Committee's work, will he mention why the Government did not require the vote of one English Conservative Member to carry the sittings motion?

Mr. Home Robertson: Not having been a member of the Committee, and not having read that part of the proceedings—I generally find that sittings motion debates are not always the most edifying and informative debates in any case—I will leave it to my hon. Friends to comment on that point.

We know what is going on. The hard Right of the Conservative party would be very happy for Scotland to be out of the Union of the United Kingdom. The SNP is not choosy about its bedfellows. Never let us forget that the Scottish National party, including the hon. Members for Moray and for Angus, East, who were present on that fateful day in the spring of 1979, voted with the Conservatives to bring the Thatcher Government into power and to ensure that a Scottish Assembly could not be set up in that year.

Those of us who want to preserve the Union and to develop Scotland's role of independence in Britain must recognise the dangers in this guillotine motion and all that lies behind it. The Conservative party in Britain, as in Scotland, is not exactly what it used to be. The absence of the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) is conspicuous. He must find these matters extremely embarrassing. The triumphal sneering of Scotland's Tory minority, safe as they are behind the Secretary of State's proverbial Gatling gun in the House, know that they can rely on people such as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes to see through their legislation, however unpopular it may be in Scotland. They got their people to defend them in the House. That must be a great embarrassment to one-nation Conservatives such as the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside.

The motion is a much greater threat to the Union of the United Kingdom than anything that members of the Scottish National party could do by themselves. The Bill, the grotesquely distorted Committee which is supposed to be considering it, and the guillotine are an intolerable abuse of the nation of Scotland and of our children's education. The House is failing in its duty to protect the interests of the nation of Scotland and properly to scrutinise its legislation. This travesty of a debate underlines the importance of the work of the Scottish Constitutional Convention which must fill the democratic vacuum which has been left by the present Government. Every vote in the Aye Lobby will be a vote not only against the proper consideration of Scotland's children but, in effect, against the Union.

9.53 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I do not intend to speak for too long. I regret that the guillotine is necessary, but necessary it is. I have now served on several Committees, and I have been amazed and appalled at the deliberate time wasting and sheer ineptitude of Opposition Members in Committee. Much time has been spent on covering up tactical blunders and on personal attacks on Conservative Members of the Committee. I do not mind personal attacks—they are part of the political game—but I object to Opposition Members devoting a great deal of time to such tactics and then complaining about the lack of time to discuss the principles and policies contained in the Bill.

That personal abuse reached its lowest point last week, about five weeks after the Committee had begun its deliberations. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, believe it or not, in a press release of 26 April referred to Conservative Members of the Committee as

"a very unpleasant collection of Right-wing, hard-line extremists."

He then spoke about

"some of the most offensive members of the Tory party."

[Interruption.] I note the chorus from Labour Members. However, I believe that those statements say more about the hon. Member for Garscadden than about my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Garscadden did not serve on the Committee when he had the opportunity to do so. He fielded the second eleven, when he could have sat on the Committee himself. It is therefore not for him to criticise hon. Members who sat on the Committee and played an active part in its deliberations.

I will not impugn the integrity of Labour Members who served on the Committee. I know all of them; I have worked with them for a few weeks now. I know that they are all sincere people with genuine convictions. I am prepared to leave the matter there.

I made it clear at the beginning of the Committee stage that, as a member of the United Kingdom Parliament, I have the right and the responsibility to speak on any matter that affects the United Kingdom, whatever and

[Mr. Alan Amos]

wherever. I will continue to do that, and all hon. Members have the right to do the same. Just as my hon. Friends and I are being criticised for being English Members on a Scottish Bill, so the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) continually rushed out of our Committee to Committee Room 9 to vote on a Bill dealing with English matters. I do not object to that in the slightest, but some would say that he was being inconsistent and illogical. Others would say that it reeked of double standards and hypocrisy.

I wanted to serve on the Committee because the Bill is about education, a subject on which I believe I have some personal direct knowledge and experience. I am not an expert on Scottish education; I have never claimed to be and I may never be. In any case, beware of the so-called experts on any matter. It is amazing how many experts suddenly appear. However, I have always been willing to listen, learn and debate, and that is what these Committees provide the opportunity to do. It is not desirable to put on them self-appointed experts who know all the answers before the consideration of matters has even begun.

I support the guillotine motion because I believe that there has been ample opportunity to discuss all the clauses before us. Too much time has been wasted by an Opposition trying to cover up their frequent tactical blunders. So many of the amendments would, had they been carried, have achieved precisely the opposite effect of that intended to be achieved. For example, there was the provision of a mechanism to trigger a ballot on whether a school could become self-governing. There was confusion about whether 10 per cent. referred to parents or pupils. Another example was the case of a ballot needed to change the character of a school. Amendments were designed to make it more difficult. Had these amendments been passed, they would have removed any need for any ballot at all. What the Opposition did was appalling and disgraceful. Once is a mistake, twice is incompetence, and three times is a foul-up.

The Opposition has had no clear overall strategy. They have been flailing about blindly from one defective amendment to another, and this has taken up the time of the Committee. They should act on their own ideas and not as the mouthpiece for every pressure group and interest group to which the Labour party seems to feel beholden. Had they done that, they would not have made these mistakes.

Another matter is the allegation that Conservative members are trying to impose English ideas on an alien Scotland. I reject this word "alien". We are one small country, yet we hear these awful terms "alien" and "foreign". We are one country and that is how we will remain, whatever Opposition Members say. They do not believe their own rhetoric.

There is a belief that we are imposing English ideas on Scotland, but it is significant that the Opposition have constantly tried to make the Bill conform more closely to the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, which covers England and Wales. Those are double standards.

The Opposition have been too confused. They should have directed and focused their attack. They should not have wasted so much time on irrelevant technical amendments. On that basis, I am almost minded to oppose the guillotine motion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Opposition Members should not build up their hopes. Clearly, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is suffering again from the virtues for which he is renowned. —over-generosity and compassion towards the Opposition—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill (Allocation of Time) Motion, the Companies Bill *[Lords]* and the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr Dorrell.]*

Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill (Allocation of Time)

Question again proposed.

Mr. Amos: It is not often that I am interrupted by the Prime Minister, in whose name the Business Motion stands.

By moving this timetable motion, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is allowing the Opposition to get themselves off the hook of more incompetence and more embarrassment. So much for the Opposition's promised unremitting attack on the Bill. Perhaps it will materialise next week before consideration of the Bill is completed. We look forward to that.

The Bill is essentially about education. It deals with the same concepts as those in the Education Reform Act, except that the terminology of this Scottish Bill is better. The phrase "self-governing schools" is a more accurate description than "opting-out schools" because the schools will not be opting out of state control. Indeed, they will not be opting out of anything unless the parents vote for it in two ballots, and opting out can then take place only if the Secretary of State confirms that decision.

The Bill is about a permissive power. The philosophy of the Conservative party is that people are free, that people should be free to do what they want within reason and that it is up to the state to justify why that freedom should be curtailed. The near-hysterical reaction by the Labour party and the original disruption by certain Scottish National Members showed what they really fear—parental choice. They do not trust parents to come to sensible decisions for their own school, their own children and their own community. If they trusted parents, Opposition Members would not object to them having the opportunity of a ballot. They do not trust parents even with the safeguard of the second ballot and confirmation of the Secretary of State. That hysteria springs from the Opposition's realisation that the concept of schools becoming self-governing will prove popular. If they believed in their own rhetoric and that the idea will never catch on in Scotland, why have they opposed it with such vehemence?

On the question of a change of character for a school —a power that already exists, except that no ballot is needed for it—why should parents not have that right? Comprehensivisation is not the last word in education and never will be. The hon. Member for Dundee, East referred to this point and I repeat: if parents want to choose selection on academic grounds, I say that we should let them. We should break down the barriers between the second-rate inner-city comprehensives and the nice

middle-class suburban comprehensives. Let us have social mixing based on merit and let us not prevent it by selection based on parental wealth or simply on where people happen to live. We have selection at the moment, but it is selection by stealth. Let us have selection in the open and on merit. The present comprehensive system of selection by stealth is wrong.

In conclusion, I believe firmly that the Bill is about choice, responsibility, diversity and freedom. It is not so much about schools opting out of an education authority's control, but rather about opting in to a new era of opportunity and diversity in the state sector. The question which the Opposition must face and not duck is not how they can prevent schools from becoming self-governing, rather why are schools so dissatisfied with education authority control that they want to become self-governing.

Let us grasp the challenge of change and the opportunity to extend responsibility. The Bill has nothing to do with market forces, rather the conscious, rational and democratic decision of parents and local communities to have a greater say in the future of their children.

10.4 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I will not follow the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) in going through his reasons for supporting the Bill. It strikes me as strange that any Conservative Members who are serving on the Committee should support the guillotine motion: they seem to have enjoyed the Committee so much that they might want it to continue ad infinitum. They seem to have had an enjoyable time, but whether they have advanced the thinking on Scottish education is another matter.

On Second Reading, I remember crossing the Chamber to have a word with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—perhaps one should not do that. I said to him in friendly terms, which was stretching my tolerance quite a bit, that the trouble with him was that he actually believed that the Bill would make a great change to Scottish education. He has all the beliefs of the zealot. He did not argue with me. I also said that little of our legislation on education will alter children. At the centre of anything that we do about education, we must consider the children.

I want to consider the process of legislation in this House. I hope that I carry the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) with me, as I believe that, in a previous incarnation, he was something of a management consultant. If we were to look to our proceedings in managerial terms, does he believe in all honesty that anyone would support the way in which we deal with legislation? Here we are in the Mother of Parliaments in the closing years of the 20th century carrying on in an adversarial manner over something that affects the fundamentals of human life—how one educates a human being. We are considering the education of nursery school children as well as those aged five and over.

We have heard stories of how Opposition Members—who do not have the advice from people in the Box—have had to rely, rightly or wrongly, on information from pressure groups outside the House. In other systems of government, pressure groups are invited to the legislature and are party to what is tantamount to a Select Committee stage. Things are done in the open. The difference here is that the only pressure groups that have had anything to do with the formulation of the Bill are those that adhere to Tory party philosophy. No other pressure group in Scotland, whether it is the Educational Institute of Scotland, the experts in education, the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association or those dealing with the sensitive issue of special needs education, have had any say in the formulation of the Bill.

To use a Shanklyism: "I left school at 14; I never had much education; I had to use my brains." I am always sensitive about the educational process and I carefully guard how we change that process. In Scotland, rather vainglorioously, we prize what we do in education. I believe that we exaggerate our competence. We may have been extremely good in the past, but in international terms I doubt whether we will be as good in the 1990s as we were in the 1890s. That is another matter. We are altering the basis of education by a Bill that is adversarial. We cannot gainsay that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): If the hon. Gentleman is complaining that the measure has been formulated only inside the Conservative party and by Conservative party pressure groups, how does he account for the fact that the leader of Strathclyde regional council, Charles Gray, said that he had dreamed up these proposals five years ago?

Mr. Douglas: I will bear many burdens in my political life, but the opinions of Mr. Charles Gray are not a burden that I will bear this evening.

I do not know who has been caught out. I accept that there may be support for the Bill in Scotland. What I am talking about is the fact that the Government are trying to impose a timetable on the Bill. I have been around long enough in the parliamentary process to know that Governments win. I am complaining that we have become a legislative sausage machine.

When I show parties of schoolchildren through the House, I show them the volumes of Acts that have been passed by Parliament. If I take out an edition from the 1930s, it is a slim volume; I know that there have been amendments to much of that legislation. When we get to the 1970s and the 1980s, there are numerous volumes. So we have become a legislative sausage machine. It is impossible for any hon. Member to have a comprehensive knowledge of the technical aspects of all legislation, particularly education measures.

We try to kid the electorate that we are experts and are competent on a range of legislation. That is not true. We cannot produce good legislation by the present process. The imposition of a timetable motion to back up the adversarial process is guaranteed to produce bad legislation, whatever Government are in power. We have to find different means of producing legislation. We have them, but the only occasion that I was involved in the Committee stage of a Bill when we started off with the Select Committee procedure was when we dealt with a measure on deep ocean mining. We had all the experts before the Select Committee. I am not saying that I agreed with the legislation, but technically it bears examination.

Putting aside the legislative process, I shall deal with the social philosophy underlying the Bill. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is not here at the moment. The Government can claim that, if it is possible to have self-governing schools, people will avail themselves of the

[Mr. Douglas]

opportunity in the Bill to do so. Whether it is Paisley grammar school or another school that is under threat, someone will make use of the option.

As soon as a school—perhaps in Fife, although I hope not—is under threat of closure, a group of parents will form a pressure group. They will look for the medium-term advantage to be gained by coming out of the system. The result will not necessarily be chaotic or totally disruptive, but there will be an emulative effect related to snobbery. There can be no gainsaying that. I have nothing against Paisley grammar school, but the whole process will lead to people wanting their children to go to a school that is "better".

In Scotland we have historically gone against that. Rightly or wrongly, people in England have been for it. They have had a tradition of grammar schools, but our tradition has been basically comprehensive. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who went to school in Arbroath, knows that—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) wants to go back to Burns's time. If we go back, we shall find that the farmers gathered together and put their pennies in to create a school. We have evolved from that system and said that the best and most equitable way to provide education is for state and local authorities together to finance it, to remove the concept of snobbery, which the Bill is designed to introduce.

The Bill is designed to be socially disruptive, not only to the educational system, but, fundamentally, to the democratic views held in Scotland. If the English want their educational system, that is fine. However, the Scots have historically related their educational system to their view of democracy.

The Scottish educational system, which comes from the Church, is a democratic one. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) asked about Scottish history. Anybody who knows anything about Scottish history knows that the Scots' views on democracy spring from, and are interrelated with, our educational system. That is what the Government do not like.

The person whose 10-year stay in power some people will celebrate tomorrow does not like or understand the fact that she is not liked in Scotland, and she does not like Scotland. The primary reason for that is the basic difference between her concept of democracy and that of the Scottish people. The Prime Minister has a Socratic, Platonic view of who should govern, which is that he or she who knows, should govern. I shall not return to basic philosophy but she thinks that she knows what is best. However, the Scots fundamentally reject that concept and believe that the individual knows what is best.

The Scottish school system promotes that concept. That is why, if a disruptive element is introduced, it will destroy and undermine the social cohesion that we have in Scotland. That is why I am against this measure on educational, egalitarian and social grounds. It is not that I think that everything in the Scottish education system is perfect, but if we are to alter that system, we must listen openly, not covertly, to the people engaged in Scottish education today. We must listen to their views and try to determine what type of education will benefit the democratic and social cohesion of Scotland after 2000 AD.

The young people who will be involved in the education process are not merely those who will be affected in 1990, when the provisions of the Act come into force. They are the ones who will produce the type of society that, industrially, commercially and above all socially, we want after the year 2000.

This is not the way to deal with social and educational legislation. It is an insult—not just to the people of Scotland, but to the democratic parliamentary process—to deal with a social measure in this way. If the Government want to have timetables and if it is essential to them to have benchmarks and to pass legislation, we should look for a newer and better approach to this type of legislation and to open it up, initially, to Select Committee procedure.

Some people have talked about imperilling the Union, and some hon. Members have said that we are a unitary Parliament. I accept the strictures of that argument, but we are not a unitary Parliament. People in Northern Ireland have, and have had to have, a different view, and there has been great pressure for devolution there. There were many difficulties about Stormont, and I said to the then Prime Minister, "If you abolish Stormont, you will spend the rest of your time trying to recreate it."

I say to the House, rather obtusely, that if the Government continue to treat Scottish legislation in this way, they will be the diaruptors of the Union: they will produce the friction. Scotland is not like Northern Ireland; with respect to my Welsh colleagues, it is not even like Wales. Scotland is a nation, and the Government are imperilling the social cohesion of that nation. If they continue to do so they will also imperil the Union. Scotland will gang its ane gae, and the Government of this day will bear the responsibility.

10.20 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): When earlier this evening the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said that all six members of the Committee who represented English constituencies would be regarded as aliens anywhere in Scotland, he was not only being offensive; he was being inaccurate. Some of us are of good Scottish stock and proud of it.

After the selection of Committee members had been announced, an article appeared in one of the less reputable Scottish newspapers saying that the Committee had been packed with six English bovver boys. I had my aunt on the telephone from Edinburgh: that good lady did not give a damn about my being described as a bovver boy, but was outraged that I had been described as an Englishman. Hon. Members such as the hon. Member for East Lothian who dismiss us so lightly and offensively should think again. It is, I think, quite noteworthy that even the *Glasgow Herald* was constrained not long ago to pay tribute to the assiduity of English Members' attendance in Committee, and the force with which we had put our arguments.

Mr. Dobson: "Asinine" was the word.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has just made a remark. He has not been a member of the Committee as we have; he has not been reading the *Glasgow Herald* as we have. Whatever our views on the constitutional question, what the *Glasgow Herald* actually said—I am being entirely fair to it—was that the English Committee members turned up and

argued their case, and there had been no criticism from the other side of the work that they had put into the Committee or of the care and diligence that they had devoted to the Bill.

Mr. Irvine: I accept and adopt those sentiments.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) has had rather a rough time in the debate. He started the Committee very well: his performance on the sittings motion was well up to standard. Things went wrong later, part of the reason being simply that in this Committee the Government case has been argued exceptionally effectively. It has not been one of those Committees in which Members on one side sit down and get on with their correspondence: quite the reverse. Debates have been very effective, and all Members on both sides have joined in with a will.

I think that that came as a surprise to Opposition Members on the Committee; it certainly came as a surprise to the hon. Member for Fife, Central, and I think that that was what threw him. He had expected to spend the entire time haranguing the Government and attacking the Bill. Suddenly he found that his own policies and arguments were coming under detailed scrutiny, and their weaknesses were being exposed. Suddenly he realised that the Bill was not imposing anything on Scottish parents; on the contrary, it was giving them greater choice. If they do not want to exercise that choice, that is a matter for them. They do not have to choose to opt out.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central had a difficult time. He had a particularly embarrassing time when we were debating amendment No. 40. He actually threatened to vote against his own amendment. Opposition Members have said hard things about the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), but he kindly and courteously intervened and guided the hon. Member for Fife, Central away from potential embarrassment. His threat was not carried out.

As all the Committee members will know, it was Strathclyde regional council, and in particular its leader Mr. Charles Gray, which eventually did for the hon. Member for Fife, Central. During the course of the Committee, we all came to describe Mr. Gray affectionately as Sir Charles Gray. Quite possibly one day he will reap his reward for the very convincing way in which he demolished the hon. Member for Fife, Central.

There was certainly filibustering in the Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has referred to the strange occasion when the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Madonald) stopped in mid-sentence. I do not want to say anything against the hon. Member for Western Isles or cause him undue embarrassment, because some of his contributions were very effective. However, *Hansard* records that he had been called to order on eight separate occasions within 10 minutes for wandering away from the point. After being called to order eight times, the hon. Member for Western Isles stopped at the end of his sentence and remained standing. This has been mentioned before, but I cannot refrain from repeating what happened; it deserves recapitulation. The Chairman said:

"Order. Let us be clear. The hon. Member must not stand without speaking, because it cannot be recorded in *Hansard*. It cannot be said that during the day the hon. Member has shown a lack of words, but, if he has now run out of words, we may make progress."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 21 March 1989; c. 250.]

That gives the House some of the flavour of what has been happening in Committee.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) represents the other extreme. Reference has been made to his behaviour. He never runs short of words. They pour out like a great Highland waterfall, whatever the hour of day or night. He rants. We heard a prize rant the other evening when he went on about political extremists and ideologies. A crazed look entered his eyes. He began to talk about the full moon and fangs growing. I think he had my hon Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) in mind. Again that gives the House the flavour of what has been happening in Committee.

Most offensively of all, the hon. Member for Dundee, East ran down the Corridor to Committee Room 9 to vote in the Committee on the Local Government and Housing Bill which is concerned entirely with English legislation. Unlike the English members of the Committee on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill, he did not have the courtesy to continue to participate in debate.

Opposition Members must be rescued from themselves. The guillotine is a kindness to them. The sooner it is introduced, the better for them and for us.

10.29 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Several times this evening it has been said that a number of alien figures far removed from mainstream Scottish life were on the Committee. After the last speech, that point is not one that I need labour.

I congratulate my hon. Friends on their hard stint on the Committee. I particularly thank my hon. Friends the Members for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) and for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). But I include in my thanks all Labour members of that Committee, who tolerated a great deal of provocation, operated in very difficult circumstances, and stuck to the arguments extremely effectively. It was hard pounding, but my hon. Friends did their job, and they wish to continue doing so.

Our basic complaint is that the guillotine will crush into the straitjacket of a timetable a very large number of important points concerning the future of Scottish education. They include the future of further education, testing in primary schools, the establishment of technology academies, the appraisal and dismissal of teachers, and even the office of lord rector and its position in our universities.

Debate on all those matters will be compressed into a short time with only one pause for breath—when, very conveniently if somewhat illogically, the Committee will not sit on a certain Thursday simply because the Conservative party conference in Scotland is being held that day. We are entitled to protest about that, and we certainly do so.

Right hon. and hon. Members listening to the debate may have grasped the fact that this is an unusual Bill. It is unusual because it deals with a highly controversial remodelling of Scottish education, and makes a central attack on the basis of our school system, for good or ill, that came upon us totally unexpectedly. I accept that it was one of the very few occasions when the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was out of step and doing his own thing in the Scottish Conservative party.

During the last general election, I clearly remember that, when the news came through about schools in

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England opting out, the chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, Lord Goold, and the junior Minister at the Scottish Office hurried to put out a statement reassuring Scottish public opinion that there was no question of opting out being introduced in Scotland. It was not a question of the Conservative manifesto being silent on the subject but of a specific assurance from the Conservative hierarchy that Scotland did not need to worry because opting out would not happen there. For that reason alone we are entitled to take a serious view of what has happened since.

I recognise that, because of the Conservatives' weakness in Scotland as a result of the electoral disaster that overcame them there, the Government were unable to man the Scottish Standing Committee in the normal fashion and in the way that we have come to understand and expect. One might have expected the Government to handle that situation with a little delicacy and tact. I cannot prove this, but my opinion—it is shared seriously by a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends—is that, for perverse reasons, the Minister set out to pick a task force to ram the Bill through in the most offensive and abrasive manner he could possibly manage.

The Government put together—I use the term again—an offensive collection of English Back Benchers, many of whom are connected with the No Turning Back group. That group would be the first to admit that it is an extreme Right-wing group within the Tory party—*[Laughter.]* Well, I had the misfortune to read one or two of its pamphlets, and the rather silly laughter from the Conservative Benches does nothing to destroy the weight of the point that I make.

I pay a compliment to Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). That hon. Gentleman came to the Committee with a well-deserved reputation for being offensive, and he lived up to it. He is, if I may say so, the parliamentary equivalent of a walking breach of the peace. *[Laughter.]* We can laugh about it, and I invite laughter at this stage—but I am making a serious point at the same time. I do not like that combination.

I have not sat through the entire Committee proceedings, although I have dipped into the Committee stage. It became clear that many hon. Members on the Committee were treating it as if it were a public school jape in which points had to be scored. If they could irritate, that was a victory, and if they could reduce the Opposition to fury, that was a major triumph. That is hardly the way in which to conduct a serious debate about Scottish education. Much of the debate was conducted on the basis of total ignorance.

I read in the Committee *Hansard* that my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) referred to the "qualy". Anyone of my age group who has been to school in Scotland, or anyone who takes an interest in Scottish education knows what the "qualy" is, but it was greeted with cries of, "What's that?" from English Conservative Members. It was clear from one of the speeches about Roman Catholic education in Scotland that an English member of the Committee did not understand that Roman Catholic schools were part of the state system. He did not understand the fundamental basics of the Scottish education system, yet he was clowning, cavorting, criticising and ramming down our throats his particular prejudices as though it were a virility symbol to do so.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The hon. Gentleman referred to his hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), but in col. 381 his hon. Friend referred to religious education as the teaching of witchcraft. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that?

Mr. Dewar: There is some dispute about that. However, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) may object to remarks from the Opposition as being wrong. At least Opposition Members knew about Scottish education, which is more than can be said of some of the imported forced labour serving on that Committee.

To take an example of the way in which the Committee proceedings were conducted, I draw attention to a speech by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. Perhaps I should make it clear that he is referring to the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), as it is such an unlikely passage.

"My task"—

said the hon. Gentleman modestly—

"in the Committee is to ensure that there is no backsliding. Opposition Members do not understand how meek, mild and reasonable my hon. Friend the Minister is."

That certainly says something about the hon. Gentleman's ideological position. He went on:

"To ensure that there is no backsliding, it is essential that he has strong men behind him. It is an excellent Bill, but my hon. Friend the Minister has a reputation for conceding amendments to the Opposition."—[*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 16 March 1989; c. 17.]

We can take that at two levels: if we accept it as a serious comment, it is simply alarming—or we can take it as an asinine display of stupidity. I leave the House to decide which is more plausible.

Of course the Committee has ended up in trench warfare. I regret that, but I do not believe that it is our fault. The first day on which the Committee sat—excluding the day of the disruption—we did not start at 10.30 am and sit until 1 o'clock. We had a sittings motion that took us into the depths of the night, and we sat until after 11 pm on the first day.

In my 15 years in the House—no one could say that I did not serve my time in Scottish Committees—I cannot remember such a timetable motion. Clearly it was designed and tabled with the intention of bulldozing the measure through with absolutely no concern or consideration for Scottish opinion.

Great play has been made of the fact that an amendment was tabled which would have had an unintended consequence. When that was recognised, the amendment was withdrawn. A mistake was made in an amendment and an attempt was made to withdraw it. What I find significant is not that in all those hours a mistake was made by the Opposition—it would be remarkable if no mistakes were made—but that when attempts were made to withdraw the amendment, attempts were made, clearly out of spite, to retain it in the debate and the Minister adopted it into the Bill, presumably because he saw it as a chance to claim a victory and embarrass our side of the Committee, although he clearly did not think that there was any educational case for it, as it was not in the Bill originally. It is such frivolous matters that are so offensive.

The Bill has been an unpleasant business. What has happened has not reflected any credit on the Minister, his colleagues and, ultimately, the House. This abrasive approach to Scottish business and insensitive conduct will breed cynicism and a certain disenchantment with the democratic process. The hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), who had a well-written speech, spoke of our hysterical over-reaction to the Bill, which showed that he does not understand what Scottish education feels about this measure. It no doubt looks like hysterical over-reaction from his point of view and that of his English constituents, but in Scotland there is deep opposition to, and deep distrust and deep dislike of this measure. It is genuinely seen as a root-and-branch attack that cannot be justified. The way in which the Bill has been handled and rammed through in Committeee has added to the disillusionment and anger about what is happening in this country.

The Bill will damage confidence not only in the Government—there is little enough confidence to damage—but in the system. I take no pleasure from that and I do not like it. If this is to be the model of what is to come from the Secretary of State, I strongly advise him, for the sake of all of us, to have second thoughts.

10.40 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): In the 15 years that I have had the privilege of serving in the House, this has been the most extraordinary debate on a timetable motion that I have experienced. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) told the House that the Opposition are using every means at their disposal to resist the Bill. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) told us that this is one of the most detested Bills that he has experienced. He criticised my hon. Friends from English constituencies for the many hours of hard work that they put in on the Committee. He did not inform the House—and if his protestations are to have the slightest merit, he should have done so—that he did not serve on the Committee. Why, on a Committee on which the Secretary of Scotland was serving with other hon. Members——

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is making a virtue out of his own necessity. He was on the Committee as a vote and a placeman, but he took no part in its proceedings.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman cannot avoid the fact that I played a considerably greater part than he did. He seeks, with synthetic fury, to suggest that the Opposition —*[Interruption.]*

The debate has been consistent with the principle of the dog that did not bark in the night. We did not hear the normal references to the Government trying to stifle debate. The hon. Member for Garscadden could hardly accuse the Government of trying to stifle debate when last night part I, which deals with opting out, was completed before the motion came before the House. All the clauses dealing with self-governing schools have been fully debated and are not affected by the motion.

Furthermore, we did not hear, because we could not hear, that the Bill is being rushed through—for the simple reason that, before the Committee stage began, the Opposition said that they would like between 120 and 130 hours to consider it. How much time will we have as a result of the motion? Some 156 hours will be spent considering it, which is more than the Opposition asked for. The Government have responded to the Committee by agreeing to amendments and making concessions as a result of the arguments that have been used. No fewer than eight amendments have been accepted, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary has agreed to consider 25 issues raised by the Opposition and Government Back Benchers.

If the House or the Opposition do not believe my comments about the way in which the Opposition have handled the debate, they should consider the views of an organisation that is not entirely friendly to the Government—the Forum on Scottish Education. I should inform the House of its members so as to establish their credentials for saying how the Opposition have handled this matter. Its members include not only the Church of Scotland education committee but the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the National Union of Students, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Association of University Teachers. In a statement published on 2 May and embargoed until 4 May—today—the Forum on Scottish Education says:

"The Forum on Scottish Education . . . has unanimously condemned time wasting by MPs who are members of the Standing Committee considering the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill."

Mr. Home Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to break the embargo on that statement and to read it out the day before?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that it was embargoed until 1 o'clock on Thursday 4 May and it is now 10.45 pm. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even the Secretary of State must take responsibility for what he says.

Mr. Rifkind: If the Forum on Scottish Education is good enough to send me a copy, I am entitled to refer to it. The forum says that it

"has unanimously condemned time wasting by MPs who are members of the Standing Committee considering the Self-Governing Schools etc (Scotland) Bill.

The Rev. Dr. J. Ian McDonald, Chairman of the Forum, said in Edinburgh that despite over 100 hours of debate at twenty-one sittings of the Committee, only Clause 29 had been reached."

Since then we have gone a little further.

The statement quotes Dr. McDonald:

"'The Forum thinks that it is particularly deplorable that the concept of 'prime time', that is of debates taking place at a time which will ensure maximum media coverage, has been used tactically . . . in order to delay the consideration of important Clauses. The Forum calls on all Members serving on the Committee to drop disruptive and time wasting tactics and to make the best possible use of the time which remains for giving serious consideration to the remaining Clauses.'"

That was a statement by the Forum on Scottish Education, which includes the EIS, STUC and COSLA. If that is the forum's judgment on the Opposition, it makes the remarks of the leader of the Labour group on Strathclyde regional council positively helpful in comparison.

Mr. Dewar: I have not had the advantage of reading this embargoed statement as yet, but I did not notice in it any words that condemn the Opposition specifically. It

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was a comment on the Committee as a whole. *[Interruption.]* Having read the record of a number of the Committee's sittings and having sat through several hours of its debates, it seems to me that the Secretary of State is, on behalf of his colleagues, going for an exercise in self-criticism.

Mr. Rifkind: The argument that the Government have an interest in prolonging debate on one of their own Bills —*[Interruption.]* That may be what the hon. Gentleman likes to suggest, but it is obvious who is condemned in the statement, to the Opposition's shame.

The Bill does not impose a single obligation on anyone in Scotland. It provides opportunities for those parents who wish to exercise them, and it is that freedom that Her Majesty's Opposition have always been adamant in resisting. They believe that they know better than the people and parents of Scotland what is appropriate for Scottish education, yet if they knew Scottish education as well as they claim, they would know that the right of local communities to control their school structure is among the finest traditions of Scottish education.

This is a guillotine motion, but it is probably the first guillotine in the history of the House that is being used for the purposes of mercy killing. It is because the Opposition are anxious to be spared the interminable embarrassment that they have experienced because of the superb way in which my hon. Friends who have served on the Committee have fulfilled their responsibilities. It is very much on that basis that I have no hesitation in commending the motion to the House.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills).*

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 135.

Division No. 185] **[10.49 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Peter
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory
and Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leslor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 18th May 1989.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 18th May may continue until Ten o'clock whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 19th May 1989.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in one allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at midnight on that day; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of that day as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolution as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusions of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time

7.—(1) On the allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to said period of two hours.

(3) If the allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for

consideration at Seven o'clock on the allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed by the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a member of the Government;

(d) and other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on the allotted day the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before the time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee as the time at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion, no notice shall be required of a Motion moved at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Companies Bill *(Lords)*

Order for Second Reading read.

11.3 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the House will understand if I speak crisply and do not say too much by way of history or generalisation. This is a significant Bill of 167 clauses, much of it the product of extensive public consultation and detailed discussion in many quarters. Its essential purpose is to bring company law up to date, to reflect changes or prospective changes in the business environment—for example, the development of the European single market; to implement changes in policy, for example, those directed to reduce unnecessary burdens on business and to deal with problems that experience has revealed in the existing provisions—for example, to make changes to the rules for disclosures of interest in shares and to refine and strengthen the powers to investigate companies.

In view of the terms of the Opposition's motion, it is most emphatically not the present Government's view that the law should contain blueprints for the internal management of companies in matters where the general public is not at risk. The Opposition's motion refers to participation by employees. Not only do we have nothing against worker involvement, but we have accepted into the Bill new provisions to make it easier to set up partnership companies and employee share schemes. However, I should make it clear that we are not inclined towards the imposition of particular models of employee participation or involvement by compulsion through the law.

The overall purpose of the Bill is to provide, in today's circumstances, a system of company law that meets the needs of enterprise, not least in ensuring open markets, while at the same time giving clear safeguards for those who invest in companies or do business with them.

I turn now in more detail to the individual parts of the Bill. Part I is concerned with the production of company accounts, obviously a pillar of company law. The Bill implements the seventh European directive, which deals with group accounts. It requires all groups in Europe above a certain size to prepare consolidated accounts on a defined basis.

The Bill will require better information to be given on the effect of acquisitions on the position of a group. While not specifically required by the directive, this is a feature that we have introduced in response to widespread concern at the confusing, and arguably misleading, ways in which some companies deal with acquisitions at present.

The Bill also gives effect to a decision announced last year to allow listed companies to provide their members with summary financial information rather than full accounts, unless the members indicate that they want to receive the full accounts. This is intended to help shareholders generally to have key information in an accessible form, but I emphasise that any member who wishes will still be able to receive the full accounts free of charge.

Clause 19 introduces a new definition of a subsidiary undertaking which is wider than the existing definition in the Companies Act 1985 and introduces tests based on control and dominant influence, to replace the existing test based simply on holding a majority of equity share capital. We are widening the definition in this way to bring many of the so-called "off-balance sheet vehicles" back within the consolidation. Off-balance sheet vehicles are an artificial device, typically controlled by the parent but kept outside the letter of the existing definition of a subsidiary. Their increasingly widespread use could undermine the value of consolidated accounts. We intend to curb their abuse.

Having made those points, I should emphasise that, as under the present law, the general requirement of accounts to give a true and fair view of a company's affairs will remain paramount. In any conflict with the detailed rules, that provision will override. It is important that that should be understood.

Before leaving part I, I remind the House of the announcement last week of the Government's decision to bring forward legislation relating to the Dearing report on setting and enforcing accounting standards. That will be done by introducing amendments part I in Committee.

I turn now to part II which deals with the regulation of auditors of company accounts—

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): To satisfy our curiosity, before the Minister goes any further will he tell us whether it is the intention of the Government to keep in the Bill the amendment that was passed in another place on political donations?

Mr. Newton: I shall comment on that later in my speech.

Mr. Winnick: When?

Mr. Newton: I now turn briefly to part II which deals with the regulation of auditors of company accounts. It too derives from a European directive which requires us to give statutory force to rules which previously were set and administered by professional accounting bodies on their own behalf. We have sought to achieve this without erecting an unnecessarily burdensome or expensive regulatory system as it is right to acknowledge that we have no general sense of dissatisfaction with the quality or conduct of firms and individuals carrying out company audits or of the professional bodies which regulate them.

Part III of the Bill implements the measures my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in May last year following a review of investigation powers and procedures. The measures amend and extend provisions relating to investigations under the Insurance Companies Act 1982, the Companies Act 1985, the Insolvency Act 1986 and the Financial Services Act 1986.

Two of the measures recommended following that review which did not require legislation have already been put into practice with good effect. The main investigation and enforcement activities of the Department have been brought together in a new investigations division. This, together with an increase in resources allocated to investigations, has already led to investigations being concluded in a much shorter time, despite an increase in the overall number of inquiries. Inquiries begun in 1984

[Mr. Newton]

took an average of three years five months to complete; inquiries begun in 1987 and completed have so far taken an average of 18 months.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am sure that we are all pleased that inquiries are taking a shorter time to complete. Is the right hon. Gentleman concerned that it is necessary to introduce part III, which gives greater powers to investigate companies? Are those powers necessary because the enterprise culture, so much supported by the Government, is a corrupt culture?

Mr. Newton: No. The provisions in the Bill seek to support the changes that we have already introduced, to which I have just referred, in three main ways—by adjusting or extending the circumstances in which inspectors may be appointed and in which such appointments may be directed or terminated; by simplifying or enhancing powers to obtain and disclose information; and by enabling us to investigate on behalf of overseas regulators.

Clauses 76 and 77 would empower the Secretary of State to require the provision of information, the production of documents, or other assistance for the purpose of assisting an overseas regulatory authority in the exercise of its regulatory functions. Those powers are broadly similar in scope to domestic investigation powers and are subject to certain safeguards.

Part IV of the Bill concerns the registration of charges on companies—for example, in connection with loans. The overall aim is to provide a better register that will be of assistance to those offering advice to companies and it will reduce costs at Companies house, which will be to the benefit of those who pay for its services.

A second deregulatory element in part V of the Bill is the provision which permits the shareholders of private companies by unanimous vote to dispense with certain specific provisions of company law designed for their own —I emphasise "their own"—protection. Part V also implements some new proposals enabling a wider range of financial assistance to be given by companies to support employee share schemes and to facilitate the setting up of partnership companies. I mention those proposals as I know that they will be welcomed by the Opposition.

Among the other features of part V, I will confine myself to mention clause 108 only, which tightens the rules in the Companies Act 1985 for the disclosure of interests in shares. This clause implements proposals that were announced in 1987 following the review of takeovers. In our view, a greater degree of disclosure is needed to protect the interests of shareholders, especially in the run-up to a possible takeover bid. That brings me naturally to part VI of the Bill that concerns mergers and related matters. One provision I should mention is the new voluntary pre-notification system that will offer bidders a formal procedure for clearing merger proposals in advance, with a timetable for a decision. Provided that they give the Office of Fair Trading certain information, and meet the other conditions, they will receive automatic clearance within four weeks, unless they hear to the contrary.

That should cover the vast majority of simple cases which raise no competition or other concerns. Where cases raise problems or are more complex, there will be powers to seek further information and if necessary extend the period for consideration.

Even where mergers raise competition problems, they can sometimes be resolved quite easily by selling off part of the merged business. That occasionally happens now, when disposals form part of the proposed merger arrangements, but the present legislation is not well-adapted to that. In particular, there is only power to order a disposal following an adverse finding by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; so if a disposal is not carried out, a reference to the MMC may have to be made.

What the Bill therefore provides is for undertakings which would deal with the possible adverse effects of the merger as identified by the Direcor General of Fair Trading, to be enforceable either directly through the courts, or by making an order, without the need for an MMC reference.

The Bill also contains provisions to restrict further acquisitions of each other's shares by the parties to a merger which is referred to the MMC; and to allow us to charge fees to cover the costs of merger control. It also makes a number of other minor changes to improve procedures and remedy deficiencies.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): On what now becomes the 20-day rule for dealing with merger applications, what will happen if the Office of Fair Trading is overwhelmed by a number of major mergers—for example, if two banks, two brewers, BA and BCal all come along together? Will there not be occasions when the 20-day period, even with a 10-day extension, will not be sufficient, particularly if there is a multiple bid with two or three bids coming in against the same company over a period of two or three weeks, but not all on the same day? Is not the time scale too short for a mature and proper consideration of the bid application?

Mr. Newton: The fact that we acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point in general terms is reflected, as he accepted, in the provisions for extension in certain circumstances. If the hon. Gentleman feels that further consideration needs to be given to it, that is very much the kind of point that can be considered further in Committee or by the House at a later stage.

I now turn to part VII, which concerns the way in which insolvency law applies to financial markets. It is a highly complex area. I will content myself by saying that our objective is primarily to remove uncertainties and to clarify the effect that most people believe the current law already has.

Part VIII makes a number of individual changes to the Financial Services Act 1986, the Insolvency Act 1985, the Policyholders Protection Act 1975 and the Building Societies Act 1986. Most of these changes are for clarification or tidying up purposes rather than being major policy departures. But I should refer briefly to clause 158 which removes the right of a professional investor to sue under section 62 of the Financial Services Act if he suffers loss as a result of a breach of the rules made under that Act. In considering experience of the working of the Act we have concluded that in respect of professionals—I emphasise professionals—the provision is inappropriate. I stress, however, that there is no change in the position for private investors, who will retain the additional safeguard provided by section 62.

We propose to bring forward in Committee amendments to achieve certain other changes to the Financial Services Act, following public consultation. The main effect of these amendments will be as follows. First, the Securities and Investments Board will have the ability to promulgate a set of general principles governing the conduct of investment business. A breach of such a principle will not give rise to civil liability under section 62 of the Act but may give rise to disciplinary consequences or the exercise of SIB's powers of intervention. The self-regulatory organisations will be required to adopt these same principles for similar purposes.

Secondly, the SIB will have the ability to require all the self-regulatory organisations to adopt so many of the board's rules as are designated for this purpose by the board. Those rules will have the same status as any other rules; in particular, a breach may give rise to liability under section 62 in appropriate circumstances.

Thirdly, both the SIB and the self-regulatory organisations will be able to supplement their rules with guidance as to the application of those rules in particular cases. A breach of that guidance would not of itself constitute breach of a rule, but could be used as evidence of such a breach.

We also propose to amend the test for recognition of a self-regulatory organisation. In future it will be possible for the SIB to recognise such an organisation if it is satisfied, having regard to the principles, the rules and the guidance, that the organisation provides an adequate level of investor protection, having regard to the type of investor with which its members deal. The board will also be able to take account of the costs of compliance with an organisation's rules. The new recognition test will replace an existing one after a transitional period.

The Government also intend to introduce provisions to increase the scope for the board and the organisations to rely on other financial services regulators, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. The Government believe that these amendments will assist the process, already under way, of simplifying the rules made under the Act without detracting from essential protections for investors.

In generally commending the measure to the House, I should make it plain that there is one aspect of the Bill as it presently stands that I cannot join to that general commendation. That is those parts of clauses 1 and 8, introduced by amendment in another place, which seek to provide for a form of specific shareholder approval of political donations. As my right hon. Friend made clear in another place, we regard that proposal as defective in that it leaves entirely unclear what the position would be if the shareholders declined to endorse donations already made. Leaving that aside, we see no good reason for going beyond the present position in respect of such donations —a policy that was introduced by a Labour Government in 1967. That legislation already provides that, if the donations exceed £200, they should be specifically disclosed in the annual report.

This provision, coupled with the existing ways in which shareholders, if they wish, can secure discussion of this or any other aspect of the report, seems to strike a sensible balance in ensuring proper openness, without unduly restricting the discretion of company boards acting in good faith, in what they judge to be the companies' interests, to disperse funds on political or charitable donations, or on the sponsorship of voluntary and sporting bodies, and the like.

Therefore, we shall not press for the retention of the provision as the Bill proceeds, but shall invite the Committee to remove it. With that reservation and also recognising that there will be many other aspects of this substantial, and often technical, Bill that the House will wish to discuss more fully at later stages, I ask the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have heard the Minister make his comments about the House of Lords' changes to the Bill, which would introduce certain obligations in relation to the disbursement of company funds for political purposes. Will you examine the position of any hon. Member who votes on the Bill tonight who is in receipt of benefits from company disbursements to political parties? The Conservative party, for example, received £4 million in 1987. Would that constitute a direct pecuniary interest and so prevent from voting any Conservative Members who received any grant from central Conservative funds? Would you not agree that if this were the case in a local authority, there would be absolutely no doubt that it would do so? To allow Conservative Members to vote away the clauses because of their own financial involvement would be to draw ridicule and an accusation of corruption on the House.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday—*[Interruption.]* Yesterday, a question was asked of the Prime Minister and it was later shown by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) that the Conservative Member who asked the question had a direct interest in asking it because of the way in which he was associated with a company—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about your financial support?"] The hooliganism from Conservative Members will not stop me saying that I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that the reputation of the House should remain clean and honourable. If hon. Members who have direct financial interests with companies vote on a motion such as this, it is essential for you to give us guidance.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I think that I can deal with this matter. As the House well knows, hon. Members declare their interests in the register, which is published. However, on a matter of public policy—the Bill deals with public policy—hon. Members are free to vote as they think appropriate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I place on record the fact that some of us object most strongly to the fact that this important piece of legislation is being heard tonight at 11 o'clock and cannot be given the measure of debate that it deserves? I hope that the Government will take into account the objections of hon. Members from both sides of the House who will, I am sure, object to what is happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We had better get on.

11.24 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which is inadequately prepared and still contains major lacunae on important issues such as accounting standards and City

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

regulation, which fails to provide for greater disclosure of a company's affairs, for greater participation by employees and for a more effective regulation of mergers, and which reflects a narrow and outdated view of the role of the limited liability company in a modern society."

Let me begin with the strongest possible protest at the fact that a Second Reading debate on an important measure has begun at such a late hour. I do not believe that there is any precedent, at least in recent times, for a Second Reading debate to be entered upon so late. It makes proper debate of the Bill virtually impossible. *[Interruption.]* I see that the Conservative Front Bench is trying to shift responsibility to other hon. Members. I remind the Government that the responsibility for ordering their business is theirs, and that if they run into procedural problems they must make the necessary adjustments. I do not think that it shows sufficient concern and respect for the importance of the Bill to ask the House to debate it at this late hour, particularly when we know that tomorrow important county council elections are to be held, and many hon. Members will already have left for their constituencies.

At such an hour we have little chance of airing and elucidating some of the important matters that arise from the Bill. This should have been an opportunity for major debates on a range of questions relating to City regulation, mergers and the role of limited liability companies in our economy. That opportunity has been severely circumscribed by the Government's insistence on bringing the measure before us at this time.

Nevertheless, we want to make it clear that the Bill, although it may appear a technical and perhaps unimportant measure to the casual observer, is very important—important for what it contains, and perhaps even more for the opportunities that it misses. Although limited by the unsatisfactory nature of tonight's debate, we shall treat the Bill on its merits. We shall welcome those parts that we feel able to welcome, such as the provision of wider powers of investigation, but we shall pointedly express our regret—both this evening and in Committee—at the important opportunities that have been missed, and do our best to strengthen what I consider to be the Bill's deficiencies and weaknesses.

Inevitably—as is the nature of such measures—the Bill is something of a hotch-potch. No doubt it began with the perfectly acceptable necessity to act on EEC directives, with which parts I and II are concerned. The problem is that it has subsequently been seen as a repository for odd fragments of change to all sorts of existing provisions. It amends—in a spasmodic way—the Companies Act 1985, the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Financial Services Act 1986, the Insolvency Acts, the Policyholders Protection Act 1975, the Building Societies Act 1986, the Insurance Companies Act 1982, the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, and no doubt more.

The problem is that, in the Opposition's view, none of those changes has been thought through coherently. The Government are essentially legislating on the hoof. Moreover, changes that are made in this haphazard and spasmodic way are continually being supplemented as the Bill proceeds through both Houses. Already no fewer than 400 Government amendments have been made since it was published, and we know that we have yet to see the important provisions that the Government are to introduce on accounting standards and City regulation.

As a veteran of both the Insolvency and the Financial Services Acts—I see that some others in that category are present—I know how unsatisfactory that method of legislating can be. In both instances the Government tabled literally hundreds of amendments, in one case over 1,000. I hope that we shall not have a repeat performance. If the Government are not ready for their legislation, they have no right to introduce ill-thought-out proposals late in the day and to ask the House to deal with them, particularly at this time of night.

We have further objections to the form of the Bill. There are far too many clauses allowing the Secretary of State to remedy any omissions or correct any mistakes by changing the Act by statutory instrument at some later date. If the Government have so little confidence in the correctness of their current views, they should take more time before introducing legislative proposals. It is always dangerous and a legitimate cause for suspicion if the Government take powers to change primary legislation by statutory instrument.

Our major anxiety about the Bill lies not with its detailed preparation, but with the Government's general failure of imagination and purpose in respect of the true role of limited liability companies. We all know that the limited liability company is an institution of the greatest importance. The concept of limited liability was introduced to encourage people with money to invest in our industrial economy but to give them protection if they were to invest in enterprises over whose immediate management they had no direct control. I can understand that, and the concept has been immensely valuable. I do not contest the principle of limited liability. The limited liability company has become part of the furniture, and we are inclined to accept it as part of the natural order of things.

An immense range of privileges is provided by law for suppliers of capital, and in this case suppliers who may have very little connection, other than owning certain bits of paper, with the enterprise concerned. The privileges range from the powers of ownership and decisions over employment and deciding major issues of company policy to the power to take divdends from the investment. In addition to those immense powers, it is surprising that we should consider it necessary to include the privilege of limited liability. In effect, after receiving all the advantages that I have just referred to, the investor is permitted by law, if things go wrong, to walk away and leave his debts unpaid. That is how limited liability works. It is time that we had a good look at the conditions on which that privilege can be exercised.

The time has come for a major reappraisal of the operation of limited liability companies. Such companies should no longer be seen as operating exclusively in the interests of the shareholders who possess those privileges. We should be thinking in terms of a company which also has obligations to its employees, consumers, customers and trading partners. We should be concerned about the way in which the market for corporate control in this country often operates in such an exclusive and narrow interest.

We cannot afford to be insular about this. A similar line of thought is increasingly taking hold in Europe and the European company statute is likely to be suggested to us

and thrust upon us before very long. The Bill ignores all that. Essentially it takes a narrow and technical view of any changes in company law which might be required. We contend that the Government have, in this Bill, adopted a narrow and outdated view of the role of the limited liability company.

We shall try to make good those deficiencies by tabling amendments in Committee. We shall try to illustrate our contention that limited liability is a privilege which must be earned by duties to the community, employees, consumers and shareholders. It must be earned by maximum disclosure of what the company is about. Company accounts should be as informative as possible on a whole range of issues which hitherto have not been thought to be of great interest to anyone else.

I had lunch in a hotel today in which I gather another celebration was taking place. At the table next to me a business man whom I did not know was describing to a colleague the operation of his company. He was asked about his turnover and what information he published. He said that he was a great believer in the principle of obfuscation. He did not believe in publishing any information. He believed that the only people who needed to have information were his auditors and Barclays bank.

That attitude characterises the general approach of people who enjoy the privilege of limited liability. We cannot afford to tolerate that attitude any longer. We must ensure that the recommendations of the Dearing committee are acted upon. We should like to see a general accounting committee, a statutory body set up to establish wide-ranging standards and with wide-ranging powers.

However, we want to go beyond that and make sure that company accounts are not just the glossy but uninformative bits of propaganda on bahalf of the company chairman which they often become. Why should company accounts not reveal, for example, the amount that the company spends on research and development, on training and on health and safety? Why should they not reveal the forms and quantities of central and local government assistance that the company receives? Why should they not give some indication of performance in respect of equal opportunities, imports and exports, the environment, pollution control and energy consumption? *[Interruption.]* The Minister thinks that companies would have little time to do anything else, but a well-run company would know about those things. If companies were compelled to operate monitoring systems for such matters, they would be able to produce information without any great effort.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The hon. Gentleman spoke briefly about European aspects. I understand that he is now involved in organising the campaign for Labour's candidates in the European elections in June. In connection with the European company statute, he used the phrase "thrust upon us". Is he now in favour of that statute? Do I detect more enthusiasm from the hon. Gentleman for these European proposals than he has shown in the past?

Mr. Gould: As so often happens in interventions, the hon. Gentleman has intervened a little too soon. He should be patient. As soon as I have moved from my present point, I shall deal with the matter that concerns him.

There are further matters that company accounts should deal with. For instance, we regret that one of the minor consequences of the measure is that it does away with the obligation in the Companies Act 1985 to disclose the salaries of highly paid employees. Why is that? It is a retrograde step. We want to know what companies pay by way, for example, of transfer fees, golden hellos, to directors. We also want to know about donations to charities and political organisations. I listened carefully to what the Minister had to say about those matters.

The amendment passed by a substantial vote in the other place has a rightful place in the Bill. We were dismayed to hear what the Minister had to say. This is a simple issue about openness, fairness and shareholder democracy. We are after equality of sorts between trade unions and companies. The Government were keen to ensure that trade unions had to go through the hoops before they could make donations. We simply want equity of treatment for companies.

On those issues it is difficult at times to pin down the Government's argument. On occasion the Government have argued that the position of shareholders is quite different from that of trade union members because they can easily opt out of one shareholding and move to another company. I noticed that the Minister did not make that argument tonight. He was right not to do so because many shareholders are not direct investors but have their savings invested on their behalf by pension funds and insurance companies. In that respect, the Government's argument breaks down.

We want the inclusion of the simple principle that if a company wishes to make donations to a political party it must ask the shareholders for their approval. If that is not done, the whole range of Government propaganda about shareholder democracy is shown to to be the purest cant, nothing more than drivel, hypocrisy and propaganda. The true interest of the Conservative party is to ensure that companies continue unhindered to make political contributions. Consequently, many shareholders become involuntary contributors to Tory party funds. That is unacceptable.

There is another missed opportunity, and in dealing with it I take up the intervention of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). One of the obligations which limited liability companies owe is to their employees. That is increasingly recognised, at times even by Conservative Members. Section 309 of the Companies Act 1985 was an attempt of sorts to recognise that responsibility. It so happens that that provision is unenforceable and almost completely useless.

The amendment of legislation that has been introduced to ease the path towards the establishment of employee share ownership plans is welcome, but it must be recognised that it is the product of the Government yielding to pressure put upon them by the Opposition in another place. We are not concerned to establish employee shareholdings of various sorts. We want to see democratic ESOPs that transfer control of the enterprise to the work force. We are still far short of that objective.

The Bill misses major opportunities in other matters affecting employees. The Minister mentioned the European company statute. That provides for employee participation in a range of possible ways, including two-tier boards, elected employee representatives and a fair amount of flexibility as to how those goals should be achieved. There are also the proposals—these originate from Commissioner Vredeling—for disclosure of information to employees. These are moves forward on a wide

[Mr. Gould]

scale and are widely accepted by many other EEC countries. It remains a matter of surprise and regret to my right hon. and hon. Friends that the Government have not seen fit to legislate in that direction. We shall attempt in Committee to make good—here I answer directly the hon. Member for Harrow, East—these omissions. If the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Committee that considers the Bill, I hope that we can count on his support.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gould: No, I shall not give way. The hour is late and I shall press on.

We shall pay especial attention to employees' rights to information in special circumstances such as takeovers and mergers bids.

There are other issues of disclosure, such as the important provision in clause 108 that extends the requirement to disclose an interest in shares to holdings as low as 3 per cent. It reduces the time allowed for notification from five to only two days. We believe, however, that that provision is disappointingly inadequate. The proposed changes are welcome so far as they go, but they do not deal effectively with the problems of nominee shareholdings. These are problems that we have seen all too clearly in recent instances, such as in the Guinness and Blue Arrow cases. We believe that the concept of corporate personality is acceptable only so long as those dealing with the company are entitled to know with whom they are dealing. That fundamental principle must surely override the advantage of privacy that is afforded by the use of nominee companies. That principle should apply at all times and not, as the Government's consultative document suggested, only at critical times.

We have similar misgivings about the recently introduced provisions that do away, in effect, with the ultra vires rule. One of the problems with limited liability is that those who claim the privilege are not to be regarded as in the same position as ordinary traders or business men. Under company law, those who deal with people who enjoy limited liability surely need to know what a company has been set up to do. I do not dispute that the ultra vires rule has, in effect, become unworkable in its present form and that something must be done. I put the Minister on notice, however, that we have misgivings about merely sweeping it away. It is not right to put the limited liability company in the same position as the person who enjoys no such privilege.

In the interests of brevity, and in recognition of the lateness of the hour, I shall pass directly to the vexed question of mergers. Part VI deals with mergers, an area in which we believe that the Government have placed themselves in a mess. The current law proceeds on the assumption that mergers and takeovers are likely to be beneficial unless it is shown otherwise. The Government, and especially the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, have made it clear that in principle at least they will intervene only on competition grounds. That takes no account of the wealth of academic evidence to the effect that mergers are likely to be detrimental both to the parties and the national interest. Even the Department of Trade and Industry, in its 1988 blue paper, recognises that evidence on post-merger performance that has emerged since the 1978 Green Paper supports the earlier findings of disappointing or inconclusive performance.

Furthermore, the emphasis on competition as the sole criterion takes no account of the fact that by comparison with other European Community countries the United Kingdom has a uniquely open market for corporate control. Therefore, our companies need more legislative protection against hostile bids than do their French or German counterparts.

Not surprisingly, the Secretary of State, despite his constant pronouncement, has in practice operated on rather different criteria. Sometimes he thinks that the "foreignness" of a bidder is objectionable; sometimes he does not. Sometimes he takes account of regional, employment or strategic considerations; sometimes he does not. Sometimes he objects to highly leveraged bids; sometimes he does not. It is now impossible to tell in any given case the way that the Secretary of State is likely to jump. The Bill is inadequate for clearing up that confusion.

We gladly support clause 118, which allows for what is called plea bargaining. We believe that the pre-notification procedure is useful—so useful that it ought to be made mandatory. If that requirement were to act as a small disincentive to takeover activity, so much the better. We want those reforms to go further. We want the burden of proof reversed so that mergers or takeovers can proceed only if they are shown to be in the general interest. We should like the public interest criteria in section 84 of the Fair Trading Act 1973, already governing the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, expanded to align it with article 85 of the treaty of Rome and made applicable to the Director of Fair Trading's recommendations and to the Secretary of State's decisions.

We should like new statutory obligations to consult and inform employees about the implications of bids, and particular attention should be paid to the importance of ensuring that conditions laid down by the MMC, and promises made by bidders, are observed.

As to the Financial Services Act 1986, part VII of the Bill attempts to deal with some outstanding issues but falls far short of what is required. It is what is not in the Bill that is of particular concern to us, especially when the overall state of City regulation is in such an unsatisfactory condition. All the evidence is that current attempts at regulation are not effective enough and are not taken seriously enough—which makes it all the more surprising that the Bill does not address that issue.

The Department of Trade and Industry is so slack and inefficient in that respect that Cameron-Webb and Dixon —the villains of the PCW scandal at Lloyd's—escaped criminal charges because of lapse of time. The average amount of time taken for inquiries under the Companies Act 1985 is two years and three months—notwithstanding the points that the Minister made earlier. Nineteen such inquiries remain uncompleted, some dating back to 1982. The DTI has been notoriously incompetent in carrying out its supervisory functions in cases such as Barlow Clowes. When it has discovered something wrong, it has been slow to act, as in the case of Blue Arrow—although I believe that there the fault lay with the Bank of England.

The Secretary of State cannot make up his mind whether serious offences such as insider dealing should be treated seriously. He is happy to allow the MMC to wave through the Minorco bid for ConsGold, notwithstanding

substantial evidence of insider dealing. In the case of the House of Fraser, matters serious enough to be referred to the Serious Fraud Office were apparently not regarded as warranting a re-reference of that bid to the MMC.

There lies the mystery of the whole Al-Fayed business. The answer to that mystery can be found in the Secretary of State's determination to prevent publication of the report until any possibility of a re-reference is past. That possibility will lapse when the House of Lords judgment is delivered—if publication is not enjoined by their Lordships. After then, and however strong may be the case for a re-reference, the Secretary of State will have no legal power to make that decision.

I believe that the Secretary of State well understands that publication of the House of Fraser report now would constitute such an overwhelming case for a re-reference that he would be unable to resist it. That is why he is delaying the matter until he no longer has the power to do anything about it. That is the only sanction that really matters. The prospect of a criminal prosecution in three or four years' time is hardly likely to worry the Al-Fayed brothers. But if the bid could be reopened and they were divested of Harrods, that sanction is one that they would not like.

That raises the question why the Secretary of State is going to such lengths to prevent that possibility from being kept open. The answer must lie either in the source of the Al-Fayeds' money or in the fact that the Al-Fayeds have a relationship with the Government or with the Conservative party which the Conservative party would prefer not to bring to light.

A further problem arises out of the Secretary of State's refusal to publish the report in the even more serious case of Blue Arrow. If he applies the same reasoning, he will be constrained to refuse to publish the Blue Arrow report. Most people who have been following the issue expect that report to disclose serious criminal offences which should certainly be referred to the Serious Fraud Office. If that reasoning is applied, the report will not be published until prosecutions can be brought and therefore there will remain a major cloud hanging over one of our most important financial institutions. The Government will have to face that dilemma and resolve it. I believe that it should be resolved by publication, which is the right answer in the Minorco bid and the Al-Fayed bid.

The Government not only have difficulty in deciding how to apply and enforce the rules, but in this Bill they are deciding to reduce the impact of the rules by amending section 62 of the Financial Services Act 1986. I understand and sympathise with the arguments, but I give the Minister notice that we shall examine that provision with great caution and scepticism. We believe that the threat of civil action for substantial damages is by far the most effective sanction, and the best way to ensure that the rules are observed.

We also find it difficult to understand how the dividing line is to be drawn between the professional investor and the private investor. We have not yet been given the definition. We shall watch that dividing line and definition very closely, bearing in mind that it will vary from time to time and from case to case. But ultimately we are left with the following question: why should the direct investor be allowed such a remedy, while the investor whose savings are invested through a pension fund or through a professional investment manager is denied any such remedy?

We were interested in what the Minister said about the proposition that the Securities and Investments Board should draw up a list of principles. We are not opposed to a simpler and more acceptable rule book, but I find what the Minister had to say about those principles unacceptable. If the proposition is that those principles are not to have the full force of law and are not to be enforceable in the courts by those aggrieved by their breach, I do not believe that the House should accept it. We shall certainly resist it.

The problems of City regulation arise from one single factor—the belief still current in the City and, it seems, in the DTI that rules which should normally be enforced with full rigour in other walks of life have less force when they apply to the City and financial markets, and that criminal offences committed in the City are not serious. That view was reinforced by the Government's reluctance to provide clear statutory rules and proper enforcement mechanisms. The City will not get the right message until the SIB and the takeover panel are made statutory bodies with full enforcement powers so that no one is in any doubt that they mean business and that the law will be applied.

The Bill is an important provision and a missed opportunity. It demonstrates by virtue of the fact that we are debating it at this time of night, the cavalier attitude with which the Government have approached so many important matters. We shall try to remedy their deficiencies. We shall try to help the Government to produce a Bill which deals effectively and constructively with the pressing problems of City regulation, the regulation of mergers and the true role of the limited liability company. At present the Bill fails to meet those responsibilities. We shall do our best to make sure that it does so.

11.54 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I share the regret that we should be discussing such an important measure so late at night. I shall keep my remarks extremely brief as a result, and it is good to have the support of my hon. Friends behind me for that.

I believe that the Chingford guidelines on mergers are correct, and I am glad that they retain support in the provisions of the Bill. I notice with approval that measures are being taken to speed up references to and investigations by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will not regard speed as an absolute essential in dealing with changes in capital structures and capital ownership of companies. It is useful, but it must not be the overriding factor.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider further and tell us a little more about the definition of public interest, especially in relation to highly geared acquirers, whether they be from the Antipodes or Britain, whose acquisitions may be against the public interest.

The 13th directive of the EEC threatens to make statutory the provisions of the takeover code. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider carefully before advancing statutory regulation in that way. The self-regulatory justice provided in the takeover code is efficient, sometimes rough but generally effective, much cheaper and quicker, and preferable to a court of law. It is a good deterrent for the sort of wrongdoing that it is designed to prevent.

[Mr. Nicholas Baker]

I hope that my right hon. Friend will not agree to exactly the same regulatory machinery for takeovers throughout the EEC. Surely the test should be that the rules, as they are applied in each EEC country, should have the same practical effect. We should not observe tidiness as a virtue, because it certainly is not.

Takeovers are a part of our system and have improved the performance and competitiveness of our companies, but I wonder whether we rely on them for our competitiveness too much. As a result of takeovers, too many companies have lost their regional and local control and have become too centralised in London. It is argued that company law may have helped a little in this process. There can be no doubt that taxation, especially capital and inheritance tax provision, has accelerated centralisation in London, as have centralisation of Government Departments and civil servants in London. I want more companies to remain locally controlled and to grow and mature where they are born and bred.

Political contributions have been mentioned. There is no direct parallel between trade union political funds and company political contributions—partly, but not only, because the money belongs not to shareholders but to companies. Subject to the general rule for any expenditure, any payment by a company must be made for the benefit of the company, and the ultra vires rules, albeit varied by the Bill, and directors' ultra vires rules, govern the payment of these sums. The closest parallel is between payments made to political parties and other payments made by companies, such as to local charities or communities.

The change that their noble Lordships have suggested is a fundamental change of principle that all payments by companies should be voted on. That would lead to chaos in companies' accounting affairs if every payment—and this would be a precedent for many more—has to be voted on by shareholders. It is not clear what happens if the payment is voted down. The directors are responsible for their activities to their shareholders and are answerable to them. It is right that those payments should be disclosed.

How do we deal with the great problem behind this matter—the Labour party's concern that companies may give donations to the Conservative party, the Liberal party and SDP and possibly, in the future, the Labour party? That is why the Labour party wants the Bill not to be amended, but it has a remedy at its beck and call, which the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has mentioned. If it is shown that at last the Labour party has become interested in business and is prepared to acknowledge the important part that limited companies play in our society and economy and the fact is acknowledged that we all depend on their profitability and the jobs that they provide, its worries will disappear.

The hon. Member for Dagenham has told us that he spent some time today twinkling in and out between lunch tables in the City. That is good news for the Labour party. It may remove its worries about political contributions. I welcome the Bill.

12.1 am

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I echo the disappointment and criticism over the manner in which the Government have commenced their dealings on the Bill in this House. On this occasion, I do not blame the Department of Trade and Industry. If a criticism is to be made, it is of the Government Whips Office. However, the DTI is culpable in that it would have preferred a fuller and more sensible hour of debate—perhaps next week—but I suspect that it was overruled by the Government's business managers.

The Minister delivered a thumbnail sketch—it could be no more than that—on this wide-ranging, technical and, in parts, deeply political legislation in only 16 minutes at the Dispatch Box. To be fair, the right hon. Gentleman gave way on the few occasions when there were interventions, but I think that he will agree that that was hardly satisfactory for a Second Reading speech. I do not think that he would be happy with it. Many matters, including those on which the right hon. Gentleman touched, will be raised in Committee.

I shall confine my remarks to three aspects of the legislation—mergers policy, company accounts and political donations, and employee share ownership. I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), on the continuing unsuitability of the strict definition of competition as the only ground on which the Government will take a view on proposed mergers. The MMC's wider remit in considering the public interest covers competition, consumers, costs and product development, distribution of industry and employment and competitive activity overseas. That remit underscores the deficiency of the existing guidelines as laid down by a former Secretary of State—the Chingford rules—and referred to more recently in a speech by the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the stock exchange on 27 October last year.

The Government are acquiescing—I was going to say "pursuing", but that suggests a degree of activity that does not exist—through a free market mentality, in the concentration of greater economic power in ever fewer hands, which is relevant in terms of large institutional shareholdings, such as pension funds. Many takeovers are purely acquisitive. Predators are looking to boost short-term funds by acquiring companies with existing assets which, all too often, are undervalued. There is a legitimate role, therefore, for far greater Government intervention—if they do not like the word "intervention", we could substitute the concept of healthy political or governmental interest—in some of the merger dealings that take place at the moment. A wider public interest basis for merger policy at the Department of Trade and Industry is long overdue.

Over the past decade, the Government have done much in legislation to encourage an increase in the percentage of the population who fall into the small shareholding category. They trumpet their achievements in that regard, and much of what they have done is to be welcomed. In addition to that, however, we must consider the more significant increase in institutional shareholders. Institutional shareholders do not necessarily have an interest in the fortunes of employees or the local economy. They often switch their money about to a great extent; consequently, they will not necessarily have a great commitment to the long-term prospects of a company. That is not always the case but it can be, and in being unwilling fully to address those aspects in the Bill, the Government are missing an opportunity.

Let me deal with company accounts and political donations. The Minister made a short speech—commendably so, given the lateness of the hour. He therefore did not enter into a detailed defence of the Government's thinking. In a sense, that in itself was rather revealing. In my view, the Government's position on political donations is utterly indefensible, and it is indefensible no matter which political party is involved.

It is extremely arrogant of the Government not to have made any concession to the House of Lords. They propose simply to try to delete the change made to the Bill in the other place. They do not propose even to try to meet the spirit of that proposal halfway. That arises from the arrogance of the Secretary of State, who, in our experience, has very little time for or courtesy towards others views—even where his own party is concerned, if we are to believe the criticisms that have been levelled against him. A few weeks ago, the Minister of Trade and Industry had to defend the Government's position on Harrods and looked rather shamefaced about it. He had to do that as a result of the lack of action by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State should have been willing to meet the spirit, if not the substance, of the amendment passed in another place, yet the Government have announced in a cavalier fashion in this truncated Second Reading debate that they intend to knock out the amendment and go no way towards the principle of equity in company donations —particularly, although by no means exclusively, in political donations. That is indefensible.

I cannot see how the Government can deny the obvious parallel with the trade union political levy ballots. My hon. Friends and I supported that proposal at the time, but we did so on the basis that such an approach should be even-handed. Any chairman of a sizeable company will confirm that, come an annual general meeting—a great opportunity, we are told, for shareholders to ask to what uses the company's resources have been put—any company chairman worth his salt and his telephone-digit salary can have the meeting in his pocket on such questions. Therefore, the Government are on thin ice in trying to defend their position on political donations.

To end on a happier note, there are some good aspects to the Government's policy on share ownership. Most notably, they have made a major concession in agreeing to introduce an employee share ownership scheme. At the moment, companies are prohibited from giving financial assistance to buying shares. That will be amended so that companies can help their employees to buy shares. That is to be welcomed. If we are to encourage share ownership, as the Government want, it is also extremely important to encourage greater shareowner democracy. It was unfortunate that, in the other place, Lord Monson's amendment was defeated. It read:

"In the case of a company having an issued and fully paid share capital of £2·5 million, every notice calling a meeting of the company issued to those of its members entitled to attend a vote at the meeting whose registered addresses are in the UK shall be accompanied by a reply-paid form of proxy."

That is a sensible suggestion which can be easily tacked on to the Bill. I do not see it resulting in undue bureaucracy or difficulty for the company concerned. It would therefore enhance the concept of share ownership democracy. Of course, some but not all companies already follow such a practice. Surely it is important to make it as easy as possible for small shareholders. Most often, they will be new to the game of having a say in the company that they partly own.

I agree with much of the sense of the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Dagenham that this is a comprehensive, or at least fairly straddled piece of legislation. It touches both technically and politically on a wide range of matters. In this case, the Government have an opportunity to improve matters. However, on the issue on which they were defeated in the other place and in relation to other potential aspects of the Bill, they are certainly not displaying a constructive attitude towards the Committee's proceedings. They certainly have not endgendered a good spirit in choosing to move the Second Reading of the Bill in its present form and at this hour.

12.12 am

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I welcome this constructive Bill. I will confine my remarks to one subject, the last matter raised by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy)—employee share ownership. I welcome Government amendments Nos. 105 and 107, moved in the other place, both of which refer to facilitating wider employee share ownership. This forms part of the overall Government strategy to encourage worker participation, as we have already seen in the Finance Bill and the Budget.

In effect, clause 105 facilitates the formation of partnership companies, by enabling the Secretary of State to prescribe regulations under statutory instrument for table G—a model set of articles of association. That is important because, in some circumstances, a decision which is marginal can be influenced by financial considerations, and the availability of those various tables —and this one in particular—will enable much hard legal work to be overcome since the model articles are openly available.

Much of the work behind this amendment was done by Lord Onslow in another place, and the Government are to be congratulated on bringing forward their own amendment. Clause 107 also has a major impact on employee share ownership by enabling companies to give financial assistance for the acquisition of their own shares in circumstances related to the formation of an employee benefit trust.

I raised an eyebrow at the remark of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that much of the progress made on employee share ownership was the result of Opposition pressure. That is simply untrue. Many of my colleagues and I have been waging a campaign since the last Finance Bill for this initiative, and I know only too well the confusion on this matter, since the Finance Bill debate, amongst Labour Members.

Mr. Gould: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to make the point that this provision was all part of the Government's plan? If that is so, why was no such provision included in the Bill when it was originally published?

Mr. Taylor: That is precisely the point. Several of us, with the co-operation, for example, of Lord Onslow, persuaded the Government of the rectitude of this proposal. The hon. Gentleman should also be aware that it is important to see this measure in tandem with the Finance Bill because the two interrelate closely. For the hon. Gentleman to claim credit for this proposal when he

[Mr. Taylor]

has been forced to admit, in an issue of *Marxism Today*, that when one mentions the word "shares" in the Labour party one is regarded as a raging capitalist, is intriguing indeed. It is also revealing that he only identifies the possibility of having a benefit for workers if they also have control. That means that in nine cases out of 10 he will deny the workers the benefits they might receive from some equity holding in a company simply because of some dogmatic structure that requires that they should have over 51 per cent.

Mr. Gould: The hon. Gentleman has totally misinterpreted and misquoted me and misrepresented my position. We have no view on whether there should be employee share ownership schemes. If people want them, that is fine. However, without taking any view against such schemes that do not bring control, our objective is to have schemes that do bring control. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will see that, logically, it does not follow from that that we are in any sense opposed to other forms of scheme.

Mr. Taylor: The continued emphasis on the fact of control is important and gives a clue to the Opposition's principal interest in employee share ownership schemes. The reality is that workers, through employee ownership, can get the fruits of capital from their own labour. The percentage of control is a totally misleading guideline.

Small companies can often benefit from very small amounts of capital put into the hands of their workers, and that gives them a commitment to the future success of the company. That is the way in which the Government want to see the scheme work. It is also significant that there is a criticism inherent in the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and others that calls for greater participation by employees. Greater participation by employees is already enshrined in this Bill in clauses 105 and 107. Therefore, the true meaning is that the hon. Member for Dagenham and his colleagues want to see worker participation in the form of mitbestimmung and other such measures to which many Conservative Members are rigorously opposed.

12.18 am

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I agree with the many valid points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I view, as he and my other hon. Friends do, with considerable concern the vast concentration of economic power in giant private monopolies and multinationals, and this Bill will do little or nothing to change that.

The only aspect of the Bill I will deal with at this late hour is political donations. It comes as no surprise that the Minister announced that the amendment passed in another place would not be accepted by the Government. I refer to the provision in the Bill as it stands that requires specific approval of shareholders for political donations. I have raised several times the matter of company donations for political purposes, mainly on ten-minute Bills.

When I asked, on a point of order, for some guidance from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of Conservative Members shouted, "What about your financial support?", so I had better declare an interest now. Although I have not heard many declarations of interest from Conservative Members, I shall declare my interest. I receive directly no money whatsoever from my union, which is APEX—the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff, which is now part of GMB.

As I have explained—we all fill in our own register—I am not sponsored by my union, although if I was I would make no apology, but over a period my union has made contributions to my election campaign. It pays £100 per year to the constituency party, and £50 for secretarial expenses, which is sent to me and which I pass on to the constituency party. I hope that that explains my position.

I shall come in a moment to the way in which trade unions make political donations—*[Interruption.]* No, there is no doubt in my mind that the provision now in the Bill should remain as it is.

Some of the ways in which company donations are made to the Tory party are undesirable. They may be within the law, but they are only just within it. They are underhand, secretive and murky. Sometimes it reminds one of how the Mafia organisation launders money to be used for legitimate purposes.

More light has been thrown on this murky subject by some excellent material that has appeared recently in *The Independent*. The articles in question brought to light what are known as the river companies. I must confess that I did not know about the river companies on the occasions when I raised these issues in ten-minute Bills and the like, and I doubt whether any other Opposition Member was aware that the river companies existed. The river companies were set up to get round certain legal technicalities that prevented gifts being made to the Conservative party which, not being a commercial company, had certain problems in receiving those gifts. After the war it was decided to set up the river companies. Most of the money received by the river companies was received from large companies and was used by the Conservative party.

Substantial donations were sent to a front organisation that I had certainly heard of and the existence of which I had been aware of for many years—British United Industrialists. The money was first given by companies to British United Industrialists and was passed to the river companies and finally reached Tory Central Office. That is what I mean when I talk about "laundered" money. It is underhand and murky. Why could not the donation be made directly by the companies to the Conservative party?

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not know about that because it was the Labour Government's Companies Act 1967 that required companies to disclose such contributions in their accounts. If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to look at the accounts of individual companies, he would have seen contributions to British United Industrialists, among others.

Mr. Winnick: I am aware of what has passed in 1967 because I was here and supported that Act at the time. Up to that time there was no way in which companies could be shown to have donated money, and even with the introduction of that provision in 1967 the fact remains that many of the contributions made by companies are underhand.

I have already made it clear that I was aware of the existence of British United Industrialists. Today that organisation passes its donations to another organisation, Drummond bank, free enterprise account. However, that

Conservative party account is not mentioned in the figures that are published by Conservative Central Office. The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) may wish to tell us about that organisation.

It seems that literally millions of pounds have been channelled to the Tory party from British United Industrialists. That organisation also supports actively and financially the Economic League. It could be argued that we are talking about relatively small sums that do not really make much difference because they amount to only £100 or £200, but that is not so. The figures published show that some £4·5 million was donated by large companies to the Conservative party just for the 1987 election campaign. Hartley Investment Trust gave the Tories £167,000, George Weston Holdings gave £150,000, British and Commonwealth Holdings gave £137,000, Hanson gave £102,000, Taylor Woodrow gave £78,000, United Biscuits, one of the firmest commercial supporters of the Conservative party, gave £100,000, P and O gave £100,000 and Allied Lyons gave £97,000. That money was given for just one general election campaign.

Surely it is not too much to ask that, before such large donations are made by companies, the approval of shareholders should be acquired. Before the law was changed a few years ago by this same Government, my union had a political fund, which, I admit, had been established many years previously. That fund could always have been modified or ended at the annual conference of my union, which would have been perfectly democratic. Anyone could opt out and many did because they did not want to pay into the political fund. Along came this Government, however, and said that that was not good enough. They said that all trade unions had to have a political fund ballot every 10 years.

In 1985 I took part in the political fund ballot of my union, then APEX. I tried to persuade members that they should continue to have a political fund. I must confess that during that campaign I spoke about the money that was donated to the Tory party by big business. I am glad that, at the end of the campaign, all the unions with political funds succeeded in their ballots—we had a majority of more than 70 per cent. The irony was that a couple of trade unions that had never had political funds had a ballot and decided to establish them. I was pleased about that.

The unions' behaviour is in stark contrast to that of the Government. The Government told the trade unions that they had to have political fund ballots every 10 years before such funds could be maintained to make contributions to, as we all know, the Labour party. A modest proposal passed in the other place would simply mean that shareholders would be able to decide whether contributions of a political nature should be made. That would affect the Conservative party, and the Minister has said that such a proposal is out of the question and that it will be changed in Committee. That is the height of hypocrisy. Surely no one can deny the contrast in behaviour.

I accept, of course, that I am politically biased—as is everyone in this House. We want to ensure that our argument is the best, but surely we should be concerned about standards in political and public life. If a trade union acts corruptly, that is indefensible. I would not wish to argue in favour of such a union, which would bring discredit to the trade union movement. I have no wish to defend indefensible practices. Conservative Members seem to be unanimous, however, that the present practice whereby companies donate large sums of money to their organisation is all right. They believe that the law should not be changed and that everything is in order, however murky, underhand and secretive it is, as shown by the articles in *The Independent* on the river companies, British United Industrialists and all the rest. Undoubtedly the time will come when another Government will be in office and they will make changes which are perhaps more substantial than the modest proposals carried in the other place.

I know that there are people inside the Conservative party, if not inside the House, who share our views. They are, of course, as anti-Labour as Conservative Members; otherwise they would not be active members of the Conservative party. I know of the Charter movement and of Mr. Eric Chalker and others who are looked upon almost in the same way as dissidents in the Soviet Union. They take a different view from the Minister and Conservative Members. The Charter movement inside the Conservative party argues that the Tory party should be far more open about its finances and that Conservative Central Office should publish full, audited accounts. It is remarkable in this day and age that anyone should have to campaign for what should be taken for granted in a political organisation. The Labour party has always published full, audited accounts. It would be odd if it did not do so.

I have no wish to personally attack or smear any Conservative Member—I am concerned with the politics of the matter—but when I look at the Register of Members' Interests I see that in some cases Conservative Members have several directorships. For instance, the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) has 12 directorships. Other hon. Members, present or absent, have a substantial number of directorships. A number of the companies mentioned donate large sums of money to the Conservative party. Those hon. Members are firmly opposed to any change of the law, yet four years ago they were only too keen to change the law regarding the political funds of trade unions. Those individuals, like the Government, are acting in a hypocritical manner. I beg Conservative Members to understand that there is a need to retain the amendment carried in another place. If there is a change, as undoubtedly there will be arising from what the Minister has said, when another Government come to office there will be substantial changes in party finances.

12.31 am

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) spoke principally on one issue. I make no complaint about it, but the Bill affects thousands of companies, hundreds of thousands of shareholders, investors, creditors and debtors, and millions of employees and customers. Perhaps they were entitled in the breadth of the debate to a little more comment on the issues than the navel-studying issue of political contributions, although I do not under-estimate the depth of feeling of hon. Members in both Houses, and on both sides, about the matter.

In observance of the conventions of the House, I wish to declare my personal interests as a director of, and a consultant to, a number of companies—one plc, two private companies and two charitable companies. The plc

[Mr. Anthony Nelson]

is the General Electric Company, which is relevant in that it has recently been involved in a takeover bid, although that is not relevant to what I wish to say now.

I also want to take the opportunity to register a protest. The Government do the House no service in bringing forward such legislation late at night. First, we should blame the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). I understand the Government's point of view, that they should not have to alter the legislative programme for major Bills because of the irresponsibility and the publicity stunt of the hon. Member for Govan. I think that he will get his come-uppance in due course. That example shows yet again that we as a House should exercise more of a self-denying ordinance about messing up the business of the House and of the Government of the day. The first responsibility lies with the House. As an ordinary Back-Bench Member I say that we should exercise more responsibility.

Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you and Mr. Speaker speak for the House. You are our representatives to the outside world. We respect you. In you is the repository of the heritage, the good order, the respect and the procedure of the House. While it is not for me to put words in your mouth or to raise a point of order, I believe that the House should be concerned—with the concern reflected through the Chair—about such procedures and the fact that Ministers are detained here late at night. I have just met the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who may be making important decisions about roads in our constituencies tomorrow. What nonsense it is that he should have to be here at this time of night because of the irresponsibility of the hon. Member for Govan. Finally, there is the responsibility of business managers and the Ministers because it is their Bill and it is within their bailiwick to decide whether to bring forward the Bill.

The House knows, and it should be said in the House, that this business could, and should, have taken place tomorrow. Why was it not conducted tomorrow? We should not continue to put up with cursorily discussing so late at night important Bills that affect so many people and lay down legislation for a decade ahead. I have said my piece at too great a length on that matter.

The first two parts of this important Bill implement two European Community directives, both of which are necessary and overdue. The Bill is an important step towards improving the standards of auditing and accountancy in this country, and the education, supervision and control of the accounting profession. As the Opposition motion—subsequent to Second Reading—suggests, the proceedings of the Bill would be more adequately dealt with by a special Standing Committee. The Bill is ideally suited to that procedure.

The special Standing Committee procedure allows for only four mornings on which the Committee sits, with the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee, to take evidence from relevant organisations. When discussing a Bill of this magnitude, technicality and importance, in which legislation is framed that will affect major professions in this country, we should want to hear what those professions have to say. We, as a House and as a Committee, should take evidence from them.

I am told that the problem is time, and that if those extra days were allocated, it would not necessarily reduce the amount of time that the Bill was in Standing Committee. However, parliamentary procedures should be pursued not for the convenience of the Government, but for the good government of the country. They should be enshrined in good, entrenched and workable law. The special Standing Committee procedure would allow that to happen and would be well suited to do so.

When implementing the European standards of accountancy in this country, the European countries will have a great deal to learn from us, and we shall have little to learn from them. I would like Ministers to assure me that just as we will implement—no doubt to the letter—the requirements of the directives in this country, we shall press hard for those directives to be fully implemented in other European countries. The single Europe, the degree of competition, the prosperity and prospects of British companies, will rely as much on the comparable standards of accountancy and disclosure—which certainly do not exist at the moment—in the European Community, as they will on the implementation of the high standards of probity in this country.

I welcome the moves that the Government are making in relation to part VI and the competition policy, as elsewhere in the Bill, to streamline and speed up the process of supervision and decision-making on takeovers and mergers. Increasingly in recent years, successive Ministers of Governments of different political colours have been placed in an increasingly difficult position. Not only have their utterances and decisions been increasingly subject to litigation and legal challenge, but they have to withdraw and be much more circumspect about what they can say, in the House and elsewhere, about important matters of public policy, industries and competition because of pending Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiries and litigation. That is not necessarily good.

Part of the answer to this problem might be to shift out of the Department the process of supervision, as I and others have sought to do with regard to the supervision of the investment and financial markets. In this case it would involve moving the supervision towards some of the accountancy and other professions and, particularly, to give powers to those other than the Secretary of State for the supervision of monopolies and mergers. In my view, however, that would not be desirable. Every merger is individual, and inevitably—certainly in the case of major mergers—contains a range of political and regional factors that should be taken into account. Ultimately, the need for a political decision cannot be ignored or circumvented, although it is right for us to construct procedures to ensure that the Secretary of State receives the best possible objective—informed advice.

In deciding to speed up the process the Government have chosen a course that has been welcomed on both sides of the House, and I look forward to discussion in Committee. It is, effectively, plea bargaining. I should like an assurance, however, that it is not a charter for leveraged buy-outs, for I fear that speeding up or making easier the process whereby applicants to the Department of Trade and Industry can be told, "Yes, you will be given permission for a takeover without a reference if you agree beforehand to undertake to divest yourself of certain subsidiaries afterwards" will lead to many companies trying it on. They will try various formulae for the hiving off of various subsidiaries. The leveraged buy-out phenomenon has not yet swept this country, but it has swept the United States.

Moreover, I do not consider the process itself helpful or beneficial to the development of British industry or to the confidence of other investors who are by no means in such a powerful position as major shareholders, and certainly the institutions. I am a little concerned about the restraints, controls and conditions that will be attached to such procedures to ensure that this is not a charter for takeovers which will result in virtualy no references being made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I believe that there is a role for the commission, which has done outstanding work and which, under Mr. Sydney Lipworth has not only proved very good value for money in public expenditure but, over the past year, has considered an increasing number of cases with great diligence and impartiality.

While I welcome much that is in the Bill, I believe that we should consider other measures that are increasingly necessary in company law. Let me mention, in general terms—I think that this relates partly to the initial dissertation by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) about the changing roles and obligations of limited companies—my increasing concern about the way in which public limited companies are using shareholders' funds for some rather questionable purposes. The House should be very concerned about the personal vendettas, highly questionable loans and activities apparently wholly unconnected with companies' articles of association that we have seen in recent years.

My own view, as I think is well known, is broadly in line with that of the late Sir Brandon Rhys Williams. I believe that there is a pressing need for us to consider ways of supporting and empowering non-executive directors—or at least some elements on the board—to require, through separate responsibilities and abilities, certain financial information. I am not yet persuaded of the need to adopt the supervisory board system employed elsewhere in the European Community; I believe that we can accommodate such arrangements within our unitary board tradition. Nevertheless, in many companies it simply is not working out.

It is not good enough that companies are making substantial loans, grants and disbursements for people and activities wholly unassociated with what shareholders believe to be taking place. That is not good for investment, for the City, for probity or for the recognition of company law in this country. If it is getting out of hand, as I believe it is, we should strengthen and bolster the role of non-executive directors. We have done that in banking. Partly by coercion and partly voluntarily, new standards of probity have been established in the banking community. It is difficult to achieve unanimity and a perfect performance elsewhere, and much remains to be done. I predict that the problems will get worse unless the House does something about the problem.

In many of its measures, particularly the disclosure measures in part I and II, the Bill does much to rectify the problems. I hope that in the later stages Ministers will be able to reassure us that the comprehensive nature of the proposals answers many of the fears that I have expressed and which I know are abroad elsewhere in the House.

12.45 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall be relatively brief because of the late hour at which we are debating this Bill. We have been forced to debate it because the Government insisted that it should be debated at this late hour. The Bill is long, complicated and technical. It is wrong that we should be debating it now. I do not know why the Government have insisted on this, unless they want to diminish the long, boring intervention made earlier by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). I must point out that he is no longer in the Chamber. He spoke at length and pushed our proceedings into the early hours, but he has now disappeared. None of the SNP Members is interested in this legislation, which will affect Scotland and will have equally grave importance for Scottish Members. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Having received that support, I suspect that my next remarks will not receive such universal commendation.

The Minister referred to clause 19, which tightens the definitions of parent undertaking and subsidiary undertaking. That is pleasing. A lot of siphoning off of companies has occurred to defeat legitimate industrial disputes involving the trade union movement. If clause 19 stops that abuse—I suspect that that is not the reason why the Minister included it in the Bill—it will help to encourage decent industrial relations. However, the Minister has included the clause to stop abuse and, as he said, to make consolidated accounts more meaningful and to avoid evasions caused by the siphoning off of companies. Evasions also occur in the responsibilities of allowing trade unionists the proper rights to undertake legitimate industrial action against companies.

Part III is entitled:

"Investigations and powers to obtain information."

That section of the Bill refers to stronger investigative powers. That is good, but those powers do not go far enough. They do not go as far as the comprehensive investigative powers of the Department of Social Security. I cannot find any clause in the Bill which allows inspectors to stand outside a company office to spy on the activities of people inside. Inspectors in the Department of Social Security have such powers in respect of disputes about relatively paltry sums.

While I welcome the increased powers to obtain information and the investigations, I would argue, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) argued, that they do not go far enough. The Government have a great deal of experience of pursuing recipients of relatively tiny sums in the form of social security benefits. I should have thought that they could invoke some of that experience against the massive sums which are being defrauded in the City.

I have a few comments to make about the provision from the other place to give some meaning to shareholder democracy. I do not have much sympathy for that concept, because there is not much of it about. The Government are not prepared to extend it, because the House of Lords is not a very radical place. It moves very mild amendments, and that is what it has done in this case. It is not all that radical to permit shareholders who provide the money to make the decision about political donations. The Government are denying shareholders that opportunity. They are giving a kick in the teeth to the people they are supposed to be encouraging.

What are the Government afraid of? Are they afraid that shareholders might say, "We don't want to give money to the Conservative party that produced this wretched Government"? The Government should put the matter to the test. They have insisted on ballots for trade unionists and trade unions. Clearly, they have double

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standards, because they will not give shareholders the sort of rights that they claim have spread democracy in the trade unions. That is an appalling example of Government hyprocrisy.

There is some interesting information about why the Government are hesitant to do that. They are hesitant because they might lose a great deal of money. "Labour Research" for December 1988 conducted a survey to determine political donations. It revealed that 1987, election year, saw the highest amount of money being given to the Conservative party. There was a total direct donation to the Conservative party of £4,528,533, from 333 companies. That is not the total of political donations, but I shall come to that in a moment.

Metal goods, engineering and vehicle companies gave the Tories £657,533. Energy and water supplies contributed the comparatively trivial amount of £14,333. The extraction of minerals and ores, and the manufacture of metals, mineral products and pharmaceuticals handed over £449,250 and general manufacturing handed over £943,810. Distribution, hotels and catering produced £229,552. Construction and other such companies, including Taylor Woodrow, which is an avid supporter of the Conservative party and which one recalls built Ronan Point, produced £461,925. Transport and communications produced £188,950.

However, it is when one comes to banking, finance and insurance that one sees where the real pearls were handed to the swine, if I may use that phrase. Banking, finance and insurance produced £1,451,550. No wonder that powers of investigation are not to be applied to such enthusiastic supporters of the Government. After all, they contributed almost £1·5 million directly to the Tory party.

As I said earlier, that was not the total amount given to the Tory party and front organisations. Total donations were £5,023,243. The paltry amount of £42,250 went to the SDP-Liberal alliance and no doubt the money came from Tories eager to split the Opposition vote. The Labour party received £1,000, and £4·5 million went to the Conservative party. British United Industrialists, which is a hiving-off operation to give money to the Tory party, received £214,750 and the Economic League, which exists to spy on workers and hand over the information in a most disgusting manner to employers, received £52,592. The Tory Centre for Policy Studies, which has several graduates in this place producing their noxious nostrums, received £81,500. Aims of Industry received £22,110 and so on.

All the money—well, 99·9 per cent. of it—went to the Tory party or its front organisations. It is pretty timid, to say the least, of the Government not to be able to say—this is what they say to trade unionists—"We have given you an element of democracy." The Government have insisted——

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cryer: I shall not give way. The hour is too late, and it is the Government who——

Mr. Wardle *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: I will not give way. The Government have insisted on introducing the Bill at this late hour and they must accept any difficulties that occur.

The Government have insisted that trade unionists should have ballots before they take strike action. Similarly, they have insisted that trade unionists should use ballots to elect officials, although the democracy of trade unions has developed over the years and the Government's intervention was really an attempt to diminish democracy. In the Government's terms, however, they claim that they have extended democracy for trade unions.

Mr. Wardle *rose*——

Mr. Cryer: Unfortunately, the Government will not apply the same principle to shareholders. Surely shareholders are those whom the Government claim to cosset. When the Government steal public assets from the citizenry at large and hand them over to a relatively few shareholders, they claim that they are spreading shareholder involvement and a participating democracy. It is described by some as people's capitalism. It should be noted that those who have capital are not allowed to decide which organisations should receive political donations. They are not allowed to decide the amount of such donations.

Mr. Wardle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Cryer: The fact that they are not allowed to do so is an outrage. I hope that it is another nail in the Government's coffin. It may not be an especially large nail, but many others are being hammered in, as the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and the local authority elections tomorrow will demonstrate.

12.58 am

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I welcome the Bill, which is a long-awaited measure, and the majority of its provisions. I regret only that earlier parliamentary antics have curtailed the debate on a most important Bill. The more substantial contributions to it must await the Bill's consideration in Committee. I shall reduce my speech to three main areas, but I am grateful that there has been no undue pressure from the Government to shorten the debate on Second Reading. I understand that consideration must be given to all hon. Members, but the House must understand that certain matters must be raised on Second Reading if we are to have an effect on the consideration of the Bill in Committee. It is difficult for those who wish to raise technical matters at this time of night, and perhaps unfair on them, if they are obliged to do so only briefly.

Primarily, the Bill implements the seventh and eighth company law directives that regulate consolidated accounts and the regulation of auditors. The opportunity has been taken, however, to improve and strengthen company law while at the same time removing many unnecessary burdens and elements of bureaucracy.

I am mindful of the great effect that the Bill will have on the regulation and practice of auditors. I wish to declare an interest as a chartered accountant and the parliamentary adviser to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

The Bill, as with every recent companies Bill, has received exhaustive examination during its passage through the other place. These are important technical and largely non-political Bills and they are often the subject of many amendments and new clauses. I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench that the Insolvency Bill, as it then was, to which the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred, contained 200 clauses. It was the subject of 1,400 amendments, of which 1,250 were tabled by the Government. That must prove that the Department, or its draftsmen, did not have everything right initially and that proper discussion improved an imperfect Bill. In the end, that discussion produced reasonable, although imperfect, legislation. In the main, the Bill that is before us has fewer defects.

Part I deals with company accounts. Accounting standards will soon be brought into our consideration of the Bill, and the issue is so important that I feel that is should be raised this evening. There may be many hon. Members on both sides of the House who feel that accounting standards constitute an unimportant and esoteric matter, but every set of accounts and every bid, be it an attack or a defence, relies on a set of standards that must be observed in the creation of figures that can mean millions or billions of pounds for shareholders, employees and, increasingly, for those who are both shareholders and employees. In other words, accounting standards are vital to achieving a level playing field.

In 1969, to reduce the variety of accounting practice and to make accounts more consistent for the reader, certain standards were formulated. That programme was financed and developed by accountants through an extra levy on their subscriptions. Therefore, that work was completely paid for by the practitioners—although it was respected enough for many of its basic concepts to be incorporated in later company law statute.

That programme expanded over the past 20 years, but the preparation and enforcement remain with the accountancy profession alone. The system has very largely been a great success, as the improved economy, as measured by the values and numbers of shareholdings, shows. After all, any lack of confidence in the integrity of published accounts would have led to a severe reluctance of invest in United Kingdom companies, with highly damaging consequences for Britain as an international financial centre.

We need enforceable accounting standards, but the accountancy profession can discipline only its own members. Only the Government can establish a system effectively to regulate the corporate sector when it breaches standards. Eighteen months ago the Combined Consultative Accountancy Body—the six accountancy bodies recognised by statute—established the Dearing committee to suggest the way forward in creating an independent body to devise and enforce standards. The result is the Financial Reporting Council which, it is suggested, should comprise 25 representatives of preparers, users and auditors of accounts, supervising and guiding the work of the nine-person accounting standards board. Also proposed is a review panel to review and enforce compliance with the standards.

The accountancy profession welcomes the Dearing report and is pleased that the Government agreed to implement its proposals. However, the ICAEW has strong reservations about the way in which the Government intend implementing them. As to the membership of the FRC, the Government suggest that its chairman should be appointed by the Secretary of State, possibly with the advice of the Governor of the Bank of England, but that its other members should be representatives of accountancy firms, large and small companies, banks, perhaps the Confederation of British Industry, and the stock exchange.

It is suggested that anyone wanting to join could pay a contribution of £25,000, say, and share the costs of that important body. That must be wrong. Some important groups, such as academics, would not have £25,000. They may not have a bean, but their advice, and the contribution they can make, would be vital. It is surely in the public interest that the FRC should remain independent and that not just its chairman but all its members should be appointed by the Secretary of State and the Governor of the Bank of England. Payment should take the form of a levy on all limited companies of only £6 for every firm registered at Companies House. That would not be taxpayers' money but a small extra cost imposed on those who enjoy the very great privilege of limited liability, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Dagenham.

It is also suggested that either the DTI, the review panel or the stock exchange should bring actions against directors—and perhaps their auditors—in cases of departure from the agreed standards. The ICAEW believes that only the Secretary of State should have the duty, on the advice of the review panel, to order corrected accounts. If that is left to any one of three bodies standing in a circle waiting fo the others to move because the first one to pick up the glowing coal will have to pay the bill, one can be sure that there will be another two or three years of inaccuracy and delay before corrected accounts are ordered.

The cost could be immense. If a company with the determination of Lonrho, for example, decided to pursue an order for corrected accounts all the way to the House of Lords, there is no doubt that the stock exchange would not touch it, and that the review panel would not have the depth of purse or the staff to pursue such an action. As to staffing, the review panel could not deal with more than four or five large cases a year. If it became caught up in a major court action, it could hardly deal with more than one correct account case. It must be the Secretary of State who not only orders those actions but guarantees payment.

Part II of the Bill introduces a new regime for the regulation of auditors. It implements the EC eighth directive on the approval of auditors, but goes well beyond the directive's requirements. The United Kingdom Government do not often go way beyond European Community directive requirements, but in schedule 8, for example, the requirements on monitoring, on maintaining competence and on technical standards are not contained in the directive. Therefore, the Government have chosen a significantly heavier regulatory regime than we believe is needed. The costs of the new regime will be increased further by the Government's decision to retain the small company audit requirement.

We in the Institute of Chartered Accountants accept the monitoring of auditors, but we do not believe that the public interest is served by monitoring all auditors of all companies as is proposed. Why should one monitor the activities of a small audit firm that audits the local newsagent? It cannot be in the public interest. The accounts are not in the public interest, the company is not

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

in the public interest. Therefore, the nettle of removing the statutory duty of small companies to have an audit should have been grasped. Not only would accounting standards and the monitoring of auditors be applied solely to firms that had a public interest, but the costs would be greatly reduced for all concerned. Only about 1,000 firms would have to be monitored if only major companies had to be audited rather than the estimated 11,000 firms at the moment. Those costs will be passed on to the smaller companies being audited, and that cannot be in the national interest.

Accountants are members of the one profession that is happy to lose an apparent vested interest by removing the statutory requirement for audits of all companies, no matter how small. We should rather do work that clients want than the work that the state demands. There would be no loss of security on income tax. After all, large partnerships do not have audits unless they want them, and it is pointless to say that banks will insist on an audit. Banks do not need last year's audited profit and loss account; they need next year's projected cash flow.

The Government are considering a number of detailed points that the institute has raised on part II of the Bill, and have already brought forward a number of amendments in response to our comments. We are grateful for those changes, and particularly for the introduction of immunity against litigation for recognised supervisory bodies. I must pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs for listening to our arguments and to Lord Strathclyde, and particularly to Lord Benson who worked so hard to achieve that immunity. Without that protection, recognised supervisory bodies and their officers and employees would have been vulnerable to litigation for huge sums —amounting to hundreds of millions of pounds in some cases—and the new regime would have been unworkable.

I regret having to leave out four other substantive issues which must be left for consideration in Committee, but my final point is equally important. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has been concerned for many years about the complexity and uncertainty surrounding the Companies Act provisions relating to the disclosure of directors' transactions. My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that clauses were introduced in part IV of the Companies Act 1980 to try to stop various abuses by which directors used company funds for their own benefit. Very few would deny that the combination of straight prohibition and heightened disclosure has worked to some extent, but those 1980 rules, which were consolidated into the Companies Act 1985, are famous by their obscurity of language and complexity in practice. The main object of the regulations seems to be to embarrass directors who use loans, quasi-loans, expenses or other transactions with their companies, into giving up their erstwhile practices because of the publicity given to them in the company's accounts which would be checked by the auditors.

The state relies on company auditors to make sure that proper disclosure is achieved, and that directors do not wriggle out of their legal obligations. The only problem is that auditors, solicitors and the barristers to whom they refer from time to time are frequently unable to give companies positive advice on the law as it applies in particular circumstances. The law, on one hand, is too complex and, on the other, is not comprehensive enough. It cannot be in the interests of any of us who want to see properly agreed legislation fully carried out if the auditors, on whom the directors, the DTI and shareholders rely, are seen to be muddled and uncertain about those interpretations. The most significant problems were communicated to my hon. Friend the Minister in a memorandum from the ICAEW dated December 1988 in an endeavour to have the matter considered under the Bill. Regrettably, the Department said that the Bill was too complex without the introduction of further material.

The existing law must be simplified and improved in the interests of all by starting again from first principles, offering greater simplification and clarity and, at the same time, removing unnecessary burdens and plugging loopholes. The longer the law continues unchanged, the longer the defects and ambiguities will be allowed to continue. The current muddle on loans, quasi-loans and credit transactions will, for yet another two or three accounting years, be a drain and burden on those who exercise their obligations properly and a muddy pond in which the ignorant or, at worst, the fraudulent will continue to wallow. For instance, transactions by non-relevant companies can be easily structured to avoid the prohibition on loans to directors, allowing a director, in certain circumstances, to borrow from his company without financial limit.

Extended credit terms can be used to drive a coach and horses through intended legislation. Too many subjective judgments must be made, all of which are unfair on an auditor trying to do an accurate job, and these lead to poor relationships with a director, who for the life of him cannot understand why he should be exposed to such publicity, about which there is no clear legal interpretation.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, in all sincerity: if a Companies Bill is not the proper medium to amend this important legislation, what on earth is? If the Bill is too complex and long, when can we expect another to deal with these important matters?

I am aware of an exchange of letters between my hon. Friend and the Institute of Chartered Accountants and of the fact that there will be a further meeting later today. Progress cannot be delayed much further.

I am sad that we have not had longer to debate the Bill. There will be many chances to debate it in Committee, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, please, not to consider that the shortness of the debate has reduced the sincerity with which hon. Members have discussed the issues that are involved and the importance of the task still facing him in producing a Bill that will be regarded as competent and workable legislation.

1.11 am

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The debate has given us an opportunity to examine some important issues in relation to the regulation and governance of companies. I join hon. Members in saying how ridiculous it is that such an important Bill is being considered at this hour. Although it is true that the delay was caused by the now absent hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), we are discussing the Bill at this hour to satisfy the amour propre of the Government. It could easily have been dealt with tomorrow, or later.

That is not the only example of unsatisfactory conduct on the Bill by the Government. In another place, the Bill was presented incomplete and poorly drafted. The ultra vires provisions were inserted as Government amendments in the Committee stage and we still await amendments based on Department of Trade and Industry consultations on the Dearing report on the making of accounting standards and on proposed amendments to the Financial Services Act 1986. Those consultations were carried out late in the progress of the Bill.

Ministers have continually referred to seeking consultations on the detailed provisions of the Bill, yet part VII—"Financial Markets and Insolvency"—introduced its measures without consulting the major relevant body—the Insolvency Practitioners Joint Liaison Committee. In a complex subject, this failing resulted in proposed legislation that was less than comprehensible and the Government had to introduce 110 amendments to this part on Report.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham said, in 50 hours of discussion on the Bill in another place, the Government introduced 400 amendments. In his final speech, the Secretary of State, in one of his most welcome appearances during discussion of the Bill, told the other place that there were still many matters on which the Government were in the process of coming to a view, which may lead to changes in this House.

I hope that the Minister will undertake that in Committee we shall have adequate notice of proposed amendments, some of which raise the most important issues in the Bill. The Government should make up their mind what they want and put forward legislation designed to achieve their objective. We should not have to debate what are merely suggestions in the Department's consultative documents.

We are critical of the Bill in three main areas. It gives inadequate recognition to the fact that limited liability is a privilege that carries with it obligations to shareholders, creditors, employees, the local community and the public interest; its failure to address the all too prevalent problem of managerial and financial market short-termism, manifested by our present outbreak of merger mania; and the reliance on self-regulation, which has not worked when high financial stakes are involved. I shall refer briefly to some of the consequent issues to enable the Minister to reply.

Given the privilege of limited liability, it follows that company accounts should reflect the consequent obligations to provide full and meaningful disclosure. We want a regime of disclosure as a result of which the company is made more accountable to its shareholders, customers, employees, the local community and the national interest.

We welcome the Government's apparent commitment to give the degree of statutory backing to the statements of standard accounting practice recommended in the Dearing report. This, however, puts the cart before the horse and we await the Government's comments on the Dearing report's recommendations for a new structure for accounting standards. We are not impressed by the present self-regulatory approach with the major accountancy firms dominating the body responsible for drafting accounting standards—and a particularly secretive body it is, too.

Part II deals with the regulation of the auditing profession and seeks to implement the EEC eighth company directive. In 1986, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said that the implementation process provided the opportunity to take "a long, hard look" at the structure and organisation of the profession. In the light of that long, hard look, we regret that the Government appear to have in mind measures which essentially leave intact the present hands-off regulatory approach to auditing.

We regret that the Government have not chosen to implement any of the suggestions in the DTI consultative document "Regulation of Auditors" regarding article 24 of the eighth directive which requires member states to ensure that statutory auditors must be independent. We welcome the announcement by the Secretary of State on Second Reading in another place that the Government amendments would require the fees paid to auditors, or their associates, for services other than auditing to their clients, to be disclosed in company accounts, as audit fees are now. Clearly, there are potential conflicts of interest, and we shall seek the Government's views in Committee.

I was involved in the campaign that led up to the National Audit Act 1983. We are concerned that the Bill in at least one respect is narrower than the EEC eighth directive on which part II is based. The restrictions in schedule 9 on the type of audit work and the bodies to be audited may have a substantial impact on the work of the National Audit Office, the Audit Commission for England and Wales and the Accounts Commission for Scotland —for example, in the establishment of agencies which may become corporate bodies but are still largely funded by public expenditure which the National Audit Office would no longer be empowered to examine. Those of us who were in the campaign that led up to the National Audit Act 1983 would be sorry to see its provisions weakened.

We welcome the wider investigation powers conferred in the Bill in part III. The Minister referred to speeding up investigations, but 19 inquiries are still uncompleted, some dating back to 1982. Slackness and inefficiency by the DTI is the clearest possible signal to miscreants in the City that they have nothing to fear from the present regulation arrangements.

Part V, on other amendments to the Companies Act 1985, is disappointingly short. The Government could have updated the purpose and concept of company law, so that it was concerned not only with protecting the shareholders but with recognising the great social and economic importance of the limited liability company and ensuring that it served the wider interests of the community. The interests of the company are defined by the courts to be those of its shareholders. Section 309 of the 1985 Act which enables and requires directors to take account of the interests of employees is ineffective.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) referred to non-executive, audit committees and compensation committees. The desire to see them introduced is held by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I hope that we can form an alliance in Committee to ensure that progress is made. That would ensure public accountability of a company in a simple way —which has been advocated by hon. Members for a long time.

In Committee we shall also discuss European initiatives in providing new statutory rights to employees—rights of representation on the board and rights to information and consultation. Such changes would bring us into line with the EC Vredeling directive and the draft fifth directive on the structure and management of public companies.

[Mr. John Garrett]

We look forward to discussing in Committee the Government's position on takeovers, as embodied in part VI. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) referred to the greater efficiency, effectiveness or both that can arise from takeovers. In fact, however, the DTI's research shows that more than half of takeovers lead to a decline in company performance or at best have a neutral effect on it. The threat of takeover leads to preoccupation with short-term survival. We shall try to establish what Government policy is on that, given that there is widespread confusion at present.

We welcome the increased shareholder interest disclosure provisions in the Bill as a step towards greater transparency, to bring the behind-the-scenes activities of predators out into the open. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, however, we do not think that it goes anything like far enough. At present the law proceeds on the assumption that takeovers and mergers are beneficial in principle. We should like the burden of proof to be reversed so that mergers or takeovers could proceed only if they were shown to be in the public interest. The Director General of Fair Trading aired that possibility some time ago. Overall then, this is a Bill of missed opportunities, which we shall do our best to amend in Committee.

I should like to refer to the Special Standing Committee procedure and the motion on it. I am glad that the hon. Member for Chichester referred to it. Our objective view is that this Bill is particularly well suited to examination in a special Standing Committee. The 1987 Procedure Committee, which proposed the procedure and of which I was a member, thought that it was well suited to a technical Bill affecting the interests of particular groups. Those groups could be summoned—for no more than three opening sittings in Select Committee form—to give evidence to show to what extent their interests were enhanced or prejudiced by the proposals.

It would save time if we could examine the Minister rather than having to table probing amendments leading to long and often fruitless debates, and the two Procedure Committees that have considered the procedure since 1987-88 have concluded that it should be used more widely. The Procedure Committee that sat in 1984-85 observed that all the evidence that it had received on the operation of Special Standing Committees "was enthusiastic" and the Committee that sat in 1987 said that it should be more widely used.

Given the number of technical, largely non-controversial Bills that come before us, it is a great pity that the Leader of the House has seen fit to accede to a request for its use on only five occasions, although we have examined 440 Bills under this Government. In our objective and non-partisan view, the Companies Bill is just the kind of Bill that would benefit from examination. In view of the lateness of the hour and the known opposition of the present Leader of the House—who, I am afraid compares most unfavourably with one of his predecessors, Lord St. John of Fawley—I shall not press the motion to a Division.

1.23 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): A number of hon. Members have commented on the time at which this debate is taking place, and I am sure that all of us on the Conservative Benches share the disquiet that has been expressed. It is a matter of regret, however, that the culprit who held up our proceedings for so long with his outrageous display of egotism and publicity-seeking has not sought to avail himself of the opportunity to take part in this debate on what everyone has agreed is an extremely important Bill. Moreover, the Bill directly affects Scotland, so it is a matter of regret that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) and all his colleagues in the Scottish National party should have taken themselves away as soon as their publicity stunt was over.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) referred to the motion to refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee. I understand his arguments. He took part in the setting up of that procedure, which is particularly dear to his heart. This is not the right sort of Bill for that approach. He said, as the Select Committee on Procedure said, that that was appropriate for Bills which affect particular groups. This Bill has wide application. It affects every company in the business sector. It is of universal application. It does not fall into the category of Bills which affect certain groups in the way that the Select Committee had in mind.

Several hon. Members have taken the trouble to express thoughtful and serious views about this important Bill. Several points have been agreed to be desirable, and I welcome the support that has been expressed. So much agreement was expressed about the Government's views on employee share ownership schemes that I am inclined to think that it may arouse some suspicion. None the less, we are glad to have the universal approbation that the provisions have aroused.

I shall deal briefly with some of the points that have been raised in, I regret, no particular order and not, I regret, comprehensively. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) referred to the Dearing committee on accounting standards. I am aware of the Institute of Chartered Accountants' concern about financial arrangements. I stress that the financial arrangements will not be comprehensively dealt with. I have no doubt that, if the new system is to work, it must attract funding from a wide variety of sources—practitioners, users of accounts, and a wide variety of participants.

Regarding the regulation of auditors in part II of the Bill, the hon. Member for Dagenham asked whether there was a need for monitoring arrangements to be included in the Bill and whether the eighth directive requires that. That is not done in specific terms, but we have no doubt that the requirement that companies set up effective supervision implicitly requires that there should be some monitoring. We do not believe that the monitoring to be carried out by professional bodies need be excessively burdensome. The hon. Gentleman will know that detailed arrangements have not been submitted to my Department by professional bodies.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether progress can be made in resolving the incredibly difficult issues on directors' transactions. All of us agree that the present state of the law is by no means ideal. Nevertheless, no one

can agree on how the law can be improved. I am aware of the concern of the institute on this matter, too, and further discussions are taking place.

Several hon. Members referred to political donations. The hon. Member for Dagenham went to some pains to knock down, so he thought, my right hon. Friend's arguments—arguments that my right hon. Friend had not in fact deployed. It was rather foolish of the hon. Gentleman to raise that matter, because what he said was wholly spurious. He argued that it was not possible for indirect investors, through insurance schemes or unit trusts, to opt out of paying political contributions by selling their shares. He said that we should therefore embrace the amendment made in another place. Unhappily for him, that amendment provides no remedies at all in the case of such indirect investors. The hon. Gentleman would have been wise to leave that argument alone.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) spoke about river companies. Any such companies are subject to the proper requirements of company law that political donations of more than £200 must be disclosed. That provision was introduced by the Labour Government about 22 years ago and has operated effectively since then. We see no reason to change it.

Several hon. Members have referred to the disclosure of interest in shares. The hon. Member for Dagenham regretted that we have not gone further in requiring nominee share owners to disclose their interest. He does not recognise that such disclosure requirements affect nominee share ownership. The beneficial interest in shares must be disclosed, not the nominal ownership of the shares. The impact is considerable, bringing the time period for disclosure down from five days to two days and reducing the threshold from 5 to 3 per cent. The hon. Gentleman was ungracious not to recognise the significance of that change. He also failed to recognise the changes made by the stock exchange in enabling companies, by their own articles of association, to provide a remedy against nominee share owners who fail to disclose, when properly required to disclose by companies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) asked that we ensure that other member states in Europe implement the requirements as rigorously as we will do. I have discovered that there is a tendency in the European Community to believe that each country is the only one implementing rules properly and that all other 11 countries are breaking the rules. We must be alert to ensure that the rules are properly implemented.

My hon. Friend also referred to non-executive directors' audit committees and so on. With his experience, he will know that the law makes no distinction between non-executive directors and executive directors. All directors are under a fiduciary duty to act in the interests of the company. That obligation rests on all directors, irrespective of their role in the company.

Opposition Members, particularly the hon. Member for Dagenham, made some snide allusions to the House of Fraser case. His allegations were extremely offensive and unfounded. When he reads them in the cool light of dawn, he will regret the tone he used. In the case of the publication of reports, each instance must be considered on its merits to decide how the public interest is best served. The hon. Gentleman does himself no credit if he suggests that anything other than the public interest has motivated the Government.

Several hon. Members referred to the provisions on mergers. The hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and for Dagenham suggested that we should reverse the presumption that a merger is in the public interest, and cast the burden on companies to prove that their proposed mergers meet that requirement. A takeover bid, a public offer for shares, is an invitation to shareholders to sell their shares. They need do so only if they decide that it is in their interests. Companies are owned by their shareholders. Are the hon. Gentlemen saying that the Government should exercise more powers strenuously to prevent mergers from taking place? Are they saying that we should forbid shareholders from selling their shares to a willing buyer? If they are trying to make themselves out to be respectively representing the parties of the shareholder, they have some more thinking to do.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye said that we must be more alert to prevent concentrations of shares. It is true that in the early 1970s concentrations did increase, but the hon. Gentleman will be relieved to know that, since then, they have decreased, if only slightly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) said that speed must not be an overriding master. However, it is in the interests of commercial efficiency that matters are resolved speedily. My hon. Friend complimented the takeover panel on the effective way in which it operates, and I endorse what he said. We are anxious that the very effective procedures that exist as a method of self-regulation should be allowed to continue. No one disputes the voluntary nature of the arrangement. We are simply trying to find a way in which that non-statutory form can be used to implement the takeover directive.

Several hon. Members referred to the United Kingdom market's relative openness to takeovers. That is correct and it is a problem that needs to be resolved. However, the way to resolve it is not by making our markets less open; it is to take steps to make other markets more open. At our specific request, the European Commission is undertaking studies, assisted in many ways, into what barriers exist and whether they can be removed by legislative means. I have no doubt that some can, but many are cultural and attitudinal barriers and they will take time to remove—but being removed they are, and that will continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and hoped that it would continue to have a role. I assure him that it will, and I endorse his tribute to the work of the MMC, which has had an exceptionally heavy work load in the past 12 months, which it has discharged efficiently, thoroughly and effectively. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks.

The hon. Member for Dagenham referred to the modest changes that we are proposing to the Financial Services Act 1986 and said that he sympathised with our argument on section 62. I assure him that we shall consult before we make regulations that define who the private investor is. It is important that we should maintain adequate, proper and full protections for private investors, but we feel that it is reasonable to take the view that professional investors can look after themselves to a large extent. Therefore, the argument for removing section 62 protection from such investors is incontestable.

The principles that the Securities and Investment Board will be able to promulgate do not replace the rules which have a legally binding effect; they merely form a backdrop

[Mr. Francis Maude]

to those rules so that a firm that manages to avoid the letter of the rules does not avoid the consequences of that altogether.

Mr. Gould: Is the Minister saying that the rulebook, as it existed in all its volume and complexity, will remain and that the principles will be additional, or can we expect that the principless will displace a good proportion of those pre-existing rules?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, within the existing framework of the law, some simplification of the rulebook has already taken place. I regard that as wholly desirable because the rulebook had become over-complex, which was helpful neither to investors nor to firms. Although we can expect further simplifications of the rulebook, that does not mean that the effect of those rules will be less. I believe that their effectiveness will tend to be greater because the more detailed rules are, the easier it is for clever lawyers to find a way through them. Adding the principles to those rules with legal effect will provide a more effective backstop because it will enable the regulatory bodies to take disciplinary and regulatory action against those firms that try to avoid the letter of the rules but breach the principle. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gould: No, I am sorry, but it certainly does not. The Minister has confirmed that the principles will replace the rules at least in some respects. I agree that the rules are too detailed, but at least they have the merit of being legally enforceable at the suit of those who suffer from any breach of those rules. We are unhappy that, if the rules are to be replaced by principles that are not so legally enforceable, we have lost an important element of the regulatory framework. As that is exactly what the Minister and what his right hon. Friend said earlier, it is on that basis that we shall object to the proposals.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman's fears are unfounded. There is no question of the principles replacing the rules—they are an addition to the rules, which will continue to have legal effect. However, I look forward to discussing this in detail with the hon. Gentleman in Committee.

The hon. Member for Dagenham concluded his remarks by listing a string of examples, all of which he adduced in order, he hoped, to show that the Financial Services Act 1986 has not been effective. Those examples had one common thread running through them: they were all utterly irrelevant to the case that the hon. Gentleman was seeking to support. Either they related to events that happened before the 1986 Act came into effect or they related to breaches of laws that have nothing to do with that Act.

We take extremely tough action against any wrongdoing. Given the sort of cases currently before the courts, anyone who suggests that the Government are anything but robust in pursuing wrongdoing and bringing it to justice has not been reading the newspapers carefully.

Mr. Gould: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: No. I have given way on several occasions to the hon. Gentleman, and I believe that the House is anxious that this matter be brought to a conclusion.

This has been a useful debate. It is a prelude to more detailed discussions in Committee. The Bill is a useful measure that will improve the teamwork within which free enterprise can operate. I urge the House to support the Second Reading.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that there is no constraint on time and that it is the courtesy and practice of the House for Front-Bench speakers, particularly on important Bills, to give way on explanations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is a matter for the Minister to decide.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 18, Noes 91.

Division No. 186] **[1.41 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Morgan, Rhodri
Cousins, Jim	Nellist, Dave
Cryer, Bob	Quin, Ms Joyce
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Skinner, Dennis
Dixon, Don	Spearing, Nigel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Wall, Pat
Gould, Bryan	Winnick, David
Henderson, Doug	
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*	Mr. Frank Haynes and
McAvoy, Thomas	Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Irvine, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Jack, Michael
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Janman, Tim
Begg, Roy	Jessel, Toby
Bottomley, Peter	Kennedy, Charles
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Knapman, Roger
Burns, Simon	Knowles, Michael
Burt, Alistair	Lightbown, David
Butterfill, John	Lilley, Peter
Carrington, Matthew	Lord, Michael
Cash, William	Maclean, David
Chapman, Sydney	Mans, Keith
Chope, Christopher	Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Conway, Derek	Maude, Hon Francis
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Mills, Iain
Couchman, James	Morrison, Sir Charles
Cran, James	Moynihan, Hon Colin
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Nelson, Anthony
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Day, Stephen	Nicholls, Patrick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James	Paice, James
Durant, Tony	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Fallon, Michael	Raffan, Keith
Forman, Nigel	Rathbone, Tim
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*	Sackville, Hon Tom
Forth, Eric	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Freeman, Roger	Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Stern, Michael
Gill, Christopher	Stevens, Lewis
Gow, Ian	Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Summerson, Hugo
Grist, Ian	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Hague, William	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Hanley, Jeremy	Thurnham, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*	Trotter, Neville
Heathcoat-Amory, David	Twinn, Dr Ian
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Wallace, James
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	Waller, Gary
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	Wells, Bowen

Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading).—

The House divided: Ayes 89, Noes 10.

Division No. 187] **[1.52 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bottomley, Peter
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Nellist, Dave
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Wall, Pat
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

COMPANIES BILL [LORDS] [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Companies Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required by a Government department for defraying expenses incurred under or in consequence of the Act, and

(b) the payment out of such money or out of the Consolidated Fund of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—[*Mr. Garel-Jones.*]

WAYS AND MEANS

COMPANIES BILL [LORDS]

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Companies Bill [*Lords*], it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging of fees,

(b) the amendment of the definitions of "subsidiary" and "holding company" in enactments in which those expressions are defined by reference to the Companies Act 1985, and

(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—[*Mr. Garel-Jones.*]

PETITION

Children (Carrickfergus)

2.2 am

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I beg to ask leave to present a petition containing signatures collected by my constituents in the historic town and borough of Carrickfergus in East Antrim. My petitioners are concerned that children and teenagers are at risk of becoming addicted to slot, fruit and gaming machines and that addiction to such machines might lead to serious damage to their education, disruptive behaviour in the home and in some cases to criminal activity in order to satisfy their addiction to gambling on machines. The petitioners believe that the Government could protect children, young teenagers and the families of those at risk by amending legislation.

I congratulate those who signed and those who collected the 3,558 signatures which are considered to be representative of the views of millions of responsible citizens throughout the United Kingdom.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will do everything in its power to urge the Government to help protect children, young teenagers and the families of those at risk by urgently amending legislation so as to restrict the installation of these machines to licensed premises where adults only have access to them.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Prince of Wales Hospital, Rhydlafar

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.4 am

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am grateful that Mr. Speaker has seen fit to let me raise the question of the closure of the St. Nicholas children's ward at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital in Rhydlafar in my constituency. This Adjournment debate is taking place in the early hours of what is an historic morning—in more ways than one, perhaps. It is a rather late hour at which to discuss a matter of such concern and it gives a new meaning to the phrase "five o'clock shadow".

The matter is of great importance, not only to my constituents but to those who live in the surrounding counties of Mid Glamorgan and Gwent. If the closure goes ahead, it will mean that children requiring orthopaedic surgery will not receive the standard of treatment that they deserve this year and in the years ahead. In order to determine the exact reason for the announcement about the ward closure and to understand the absence, as yet, of a statement about alternative provision, we need to look at the background to this year's financial provision for the South Glamorgan health authority which controls the hospitals in the county, part of which I have the honour to represent.

This year late notification about funding for the present financial year was given to the county by the Welsh Office. The county received that notification only in February. The funding meant that the county had to make savings on its budget of £2·3 million, or 1·3 per cent., and had to find those savings in the short time between February and March. All the unit managers were asked desperately to suggest ways in which they might contribute to those savings. They saw an impending financial crisis, given the few weeks that they had to try to find the savings.

The general manager of the area health authority, Gordon Harrhy, was interviewed on Radio Wales, and was asked what he thought about the budget allocation received from the Welsh Office. He said, "It is very interesting to me. I have frequently listened to Government spokesmen saying that each year the Health Service receives an increase in real terms. I am the manager of the health authority and I know that I have less money in real terms and less to spend in 1989 than I had in 1988."

The process by which the recommendations for savings were brought before the authority for acceptance or rejection took only a few weeks. The relevant proposals were put before the authority at its monthly meeting in March and confirmed at the April meeting. The savings package included weekend closures at the University hospital, the closure of a rehabilitation ward also in my constituency at Rookwood, and certain other smaller miscellaneous savings.

The one saving that brought the greatest calumny on the Government's head and on the head of the health authority was the proposal to close the children's ward at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar. That hospital will always be known to the natives of Radyr, where I grew up, as the American hospital. It was the nearest hospital to the village of my childhood, and was built during the war for the American service men and gradually converted in the early 1950s into the primary orthopaedic hospital for

south Wales and, with Oswestry, is one of the only two orthopaedic specialist hospitals serving the whole of Wales.

There is no question but that the March decision was a bombshell. All the operating theatres were new and had been opened only last August at a cost of £750,000. They are next door to the children's ward and there is a proud plaque on the side of the new operating theatre which says that it was opened by Alun Jones, chairman of the health authority, in August 1988. The Welsh Office paid for that, as it had paid £3 million to £4 million for the upgrading programme for the Prince of Wales hospital after the reversal of a previous decision for the closure for the whole hospital. That closure had been announced by the previous Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards as he then was, in 1982.

The savings that would be achieved amounted to £40,000, and the total savings required were £2·3 million. No more than 2 or 3 per cent. of the total savings would come from the closure of the children's ward. However, the authority decided to proceed, although it was faced with misleading medical and financial statistics. Those of us who have been involved in the campaign to reverse the decision have had no hesitation in saying that the health authority based its decision on the papers which were put before it at its March monthly meeting, which were the result of those statistics.

The authority was told that it would save £47,000. Omitted was the fact that the education authority paid £7,000 towards the cost of the school. It is the only school in the hospitals within south Glamorgan that covers the five to 16-year age group. It is possible for someone within that group to do his or her O-levels or GCSEs at the hospital. That is more likely to be of importance to children requiring orthopaedic surgery than those needing general medicine because they have tended in the past to spend extremely long periods in hospital. Even today, children needing orthopaedic surgery may spend six months in hospital, notwithstanding the wonderful technology for correcting length of limbs and club feet, for example. Patients still spend a much longer period in an orthopaedic hospital than they would for most forms of hospital treatment. As I have said, there is a school provision, which is paid for by the education authority.

It is important that there were misleading medical statistics. In effect, the authority said, "We are going to close the children's ward because it is under-used. It is occupied for only 47 per cent. of the time that it is available for use." It is a 12-bed ward. The medical staff at the hospital keep its records carefully. It found that, if midday bed occupancy was taken into account, there is 65 per cent. occupancy. The staff say, for sound medical reasons, that midday occupancy is much more relevant than night occupancy. Children who require orthopaedic treatment are not ill in the conventional sense. They are not suffering from an infection, a fever or any recognisable illness. If it is possible for them to go home to be with their family, or even to attend school, they should be sent home overnight, to return the following day for their treatment. The midday count is the relevant one. The difference between 47 per cent. and 65 per cent. is relevant, because 75 per cent. is for all practical intents and purposes the maximum bed occupancy for a children's ward.

What else was wrong with the way in which the health authority went about its decision making? Most people were appalled that it was willing to announce closure of a children's ward without being able to say with any confidence that there was an alternative for the provision of orthopaedic surgery for children. In other words, it claimed that there were several options. What were they? One option was a move to the Coronation ward of the Cardiff Royal infirmary. The infirmary is in the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist). I am pleased to see him in his place tonight because I can say of him, with confidence, that if he required orthopaedic surgery, he, like myself, would probably attend National Health Service hospitals in South Glamorgan.

The Coronation ward at the Royal infirmary is a general children's ward. It deals with pneumonia treatment, bladder infections or whatever. It is entirely unsuitable for cold orthopaedic surgery cases, which may require treatment for months but which are not suffering from infection. It would be wrong to mix them with pneumonia and bladder infection cases because they would be at risk of catching those infections during the lengthy period that they would be in the ward. At least the orthopaedic cases would have the same children's facilities, which is an attractive idea, but the ward would be unsuitable medically. Today, one of the senior staff of the health authority has told me that it was never on to opt for a move to the Coronation ward. I was told that it was never a practical solution. It seems that it was something written down in a moment of panic. The entire episode betokens strongly management by panic after a spot of government by panic following late notification of the budget.

The other alternatives relate to changes within the Prince of Wales hospital. One is conversion of the day ward used by outpatients for use as a children's ward as well. Another involves the conversion of an adult ward to provide a children's annex. Another option is touting for more business, as it was put, to draw more children in to the hospital and make greater use of the beds there.

The problem with converting the day ward is that outpatient treatment is a rapidly expanding aspect of hospital provision. The day ward does not offer enough room for adaptation, so that is a totally impracticable suggestion. I am reliably informed by the medical staff that day ward use is high and is increasing as many more people are treated on a day basis than used to be the case. They include patients for minor surgery to remove ganglia and trigger thumb, who do not need to stay overnight.

However, children could not share the same ward. They would play around and would receive their drug treatment while adults in the same ward would be receiving totally different drugs, needing peace and quiet as they recover for a couple of hours after undergoing surgery before returning home. It would hardly be ideal for such patients to share a ward with children staying in the hospital for months and who want to play on go-karts or computers as a diversion in the long months of their stay.

Converting an adult ward to include a children's annex is also totally impracticable without capital works, which would take away much of the £47,000 savings. The hospital's senior medical staff are on record as saying as much. The Minister may have read the remarks of Hans Weisl, the most distinguished orthopaedics surgeon, who wrote an open letter to the health authority that was published yesterday. He commented that such an option just is not on without major works. The senior medical staff all agree on that point and have pressed the health

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

authority to forget that idea. It would cancel out most of the savings, leaving perhaps £10,000. What kind of contribution is that to the intended savings of £2·3 million?

It is appalling that the health authority should decide to close a children's ward without being confident that any of the alternatives it suggested, and loosely dangled before the health authority's decision-makers when they had to put up their hands to vote, are practical alternatives that the orthopaedic staff concerned are prepared to countenance as suitable, and without requiring expenditure that would negate the savings that originated that madcap closure.

Since the announcement of a campaign to rescind the closure decision, the health authority has reacted like a scalded cat. Its chairman, Alun Jones, sent a nonsensical letter to all the medical staff involved. It includes the following arrant nonsense:

"I must emphasise that wherever these services are relocated the current provision for children will be maintained and there is no intention whatsoever that children's facilities should be mixed with adult facilities on the ward."

That cannot be done. It is not achievable. That comment suggests that the authority intends a move to the Coronation ward at Cardiff Royal infirmary, which I was told today is not on—and never was.

The authority must get into its head the principle that the medical staff have already emphasised—that children requiring orthopaedic treatment cannot be mixed with children receiving treatment for infectious diseases, or with adults receiving orthopaedic treatment. There is no way that Mr. Jones can make good the promise in his letter dated 26 April to the medical staff.

The health authority's other reaction was to send senior medical staff to the Prince of Wales to pore over the figures that the nursing sisters there thoroughly researched to try to disprove their bed occupancy figure of 65 per cent., taking into account midday occupancy. Senior nursing staff have spent until after 7 o'clock every night trying to double check and find fault with the figures, so far with no result. There are always two or three more children in the ward during the day than at night.

The staff who have led the anti-closure campaign have been browbeaten by senior medical staff from the health authority who told them quite incorrectly that no child is sent home at weekends for the good of that child, and that if it ever happens it is only five or six times in a year. That is not true. The sisters in charge of the ward have been told that it is only ever closed at weekends when there are no cases, but they know that it occasionally is closed at weekends as an economy measure and not because there are no cases.

In the few minutes that remain, I turn to the Yates report. The Minister will be well aware that the Welsh Office paid for John Yates, a distinguished consulting health economist, to prepare a report to assist the Welsh Office to attack the lengthy waiting lists in adult orthopaedic surgery. That report has now been prepared. Its contents are known. It recommends that the number of orthopaedic surgeons operating in South Glamorgan should be increased from six to eight, an increase of 25 per cent. That will obviously increase the throughput of adult work and will attack the 2,000-strong waiting list for adult orthopaedic work. That in turn will have a major impact on the way in which the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital is used. It is the height of irresponsibility for the health authority, knowing that the Welsh Office-commissioned report is about to be published, but before the report can be published, before the public can judge what it says, before they can act on it or consider its implications on the use of orthopaedic facilities for children and adults, to go ahead and announce the closure of the children's ward.

I hope that the Minister will step in. If the children's ward is closed, where will the children go? If the Welsh Office does not know the answer, if the South Glamorgan health authority does not know the answer, at least they should ensure that the South Glamorgan health authority suspends the closure until the Yates report is published and acted on and its implications for the treatment of children requiring orthopaedic surgery are fully worked out. After all, the children deserve the best, and they have nowhere else to go but to that ward.

2.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) has raised at some length—and I do not object to that—his opposition to South Glamorgan health authority's proposal to relocate the children's ward at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar. I welcome the opportunity to explain to him why, at this stage in the proceedings, his comments would have been better addressed to the health authority itself.

The Prince of Wales hospital was constructed during world war two as an American army hospital. In the early 1950s, it was converted to an orthopaedic hospital to serve the general population and the first orthopaedic patients were admitted in April 1953. Since that time, the hospital has earned a reputation for excellence of clinical practice and commitment by all staff to excellent standards of care. The hospital is exclusively orthopaedic, although it shares common services with the adjacent blood transfusion centre. It attracts patients principally from south and mid-Glamorgan, Gwent and part of Powys.

I understand that the proposal to relocate the children's ward, which currently houses 12 beds, was one of a number of measures proposed as cash-releasing cost improvements in the health authority's budget strategy. The strategy was accepted in principle by the authority at its meeting on 15 March this year. The authority's officers are at present considering options—in consultation with Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan community health councils—for re-provision of the service for children. I understand that the options include re-provision of a smaller ward, which the authority would regard as more suited to the actual utilisation of the existing ward in 1988. Such a ward might be provided by using another ward, or part of another ward, at Rhydlafar or by using the children's ward at Cardiff Royal infirmary. I understand that these options are not exhaustive and the way forward is to be discussed at a joint meeting of members and officers of the authority and community health council representatives later this month. Comments on the options should therefore be given to the health authority at this stage.

The matter is not one which is before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales at this stage—indeed, it may not come before him. The guidance to health authorities on the procedure for consultation on the

closure and change of use of health buildings is contained in a document known as Health Service planning paper 5, which is not statutory but which sets out the procedures which my right hon. Friend would expect to be followed. It adds to the statutory right of CHCs to be consulted on substantial variations in service, which is set out in the CHC regulations 1985.

Planning paper 5 states that proposals for partial closure or change of use which amount to

"any substantial variation in the provision"

of the Health Service within the meaning of regulation 19(1) of the Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 should be discussed with a range of bodies including community health councils, local authorities—through the joint consultative committees—family practitioner committees, appropriate local advisory committees, joint staff consultative committees and any other recognised staff organisation not represented on the committees. The document envisages that in most cases it should be possible for local agreement to be reached on restricted consultation but, if not, the formal consultation procedure should be embarked upon.

The formal consultation procedure can be summarised as follows. The health authority should first prepare a consultation document giving reasons for the proposals. This document should include the implications for patients, an indication of any options which have been considered and the arguments put forward in favour of them. The possibility of using redundant facilities for other purposes and manpower implications should be considered.

A three-month period of consultation is the next stage, with comments invited from the bodies that I have already mentioned, together with any other body or person which the health authority considers should be consulted. The health authority should then reconsider the proposals in the light of the comments received. Should an agreed decision be reached which accords with guidelines from the Welsh Office, the health authority may proceed with the proposals subject to a one-month period during which individuals or organisations may appeal to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State against the solution agreed at local level. If the result is either irresoluble disagreement or a locally agreed solution which differs substantially from the original proposals, the authority is required to refer the matter, with its recommendations and an outline of the alternative arrangements, to my right hon. Friend. Following referral, a period of one month should be allowed and publicly announced in which individuals or organisations may make representations on the proposals that have been put forward.

Clearly, at this stage, before the health authority has decided upon its favoured option, it would be wrong to speculate on whether restricted or formal consultation would be appropriate. Equally, given that there is a possibility that the matter may be put before my right hon. Friend, it would not be proper for me to comment on the merits of any of the proposals.

I make no apology for the requirement on the health authority to release cash through cost improvements. The Secretary of State's first priority for the National Health Service in Wales is that it should seek to maximise the patient care which it provides from the human, physical and financial resources available to it.

As the growth in demand for services continues, the realisation of increasing cash savings through cost improvement programmes will play a crucial part in the funding of discretionary developments. Indeed, cost improvements may represent a major source of moneys for developments for some health authorities.

Cash-releasing cost improvements are measures aimed at improving the use of resources by reducing the cost of running a service while achieving the same or higher levels of service output and quality. They should arise from clearly identified and planned management action. They are not synonymous with the total cash savings made by authorities in any one year as such savings may also accrue from unplanned or "windfall" savings measures, or result from planned changes in the quantity of service provided. Nor are they synonymous with the total improvements in efficiency which an authority might achieve as these will include gains made by treating additional patients within the same resources, or for a less than commensurate increase in resources.

Cash-releasing savings are important and need to be clearly identified because they provide authorities with a margin of flexibility to meet in-year pressures that may arise, and because they release funds which can be used to develop new services.

Progress has been made, but the National Health Service has a continuing responsibility to pursue every opportunity for improving the efficiency with which it manages the resources at its disposal. There is a need to extend the scope of cost-improvement programmes and district health authorities are expected to include all their activities and occupational groups in the search for savings.

In addition, the Welsh Office has emphasised the role of the search for cash-releasing cost improvements as part of the annual National Health Service planning process. Authorities have been told to bear in mind the following points in planning, monitoring and reporting on cash releasing cost improvements. First, cash-releasing cost-improvement measures should not result in a reduction in the quantity or standard of service provided. It is particularly important that, where they relate to patient services, means should be specified to ensure that this does not happen. Service rationalisations pursued as cash-releasing cost improvements should not be service reductions.

Secondly, cash-releasing cost improvements should be sustained. In practice this means that they should normally produce recurrent savings. Non-recurrent savings arising, for example, from the unplanned freezing of posts or other vacancy control procedures should not be classified as cost improvements. Revenue savings which arise as a result of slippage or deferment of capital schemes or reductions in service levels are not legitimate cost improvements. Health authorities should still pursue vigorously all opportunities for further supplementing funds from the disposal of surplus on redundant capital assets.

My right hon. Friend and I expect all authorities in Wales to plan on the basis of achieving cash-releasing cost improvements and additional income of the same order as is planned by authorities in England. This means that, for 1989-90, Welsh DHAs will be required to plan to obtain recurring cash-releasing cost improvements of at least 1·1 per cent. of their 1989-90 recurring revenue allocations and additional recurrent income generation equivalent to at least 0·2 per cent. of those allocations.

I want to emphasise that our aim is to achieve greater efficiency. We are not talking about reductions in either the

[Mr. Ian Grist]

quantity or standard of service provided, and district health authorities are specifically charged to ensure that that does not happen. Nor are we talking about inadequate resources for South Glamorgan health authority, which has received an increase in recurrent revenue resources of some £38·9 million after allowing for inflation between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

I should like to take this opportunity to emphasise that the proposal to relocate the children's ward is separate from the longer-term proposals for the hospital contained in South Glamorgan's draft strategic plan which is before my right hon. Friend at the moment.

Under Health Service planning procedures introduced in 1982, district health authorities are required to produce formal strategic plans and submit these to the Welsh Office for approval every five years. The purpose of strategic plans is to provide a framework of agreed long-term objectives within which short-term operational planning can be undertaken. Strategic plans set out objectives and priorities for the management and development of the full range of health services for the following 10 years or so. They also outline the significant steps necessary to achieve them.

South Glamorgan health authority's original strategic plan had significant weakness and was not approved. Basically, the plan envisaged a continuation of the status quo notwithstanding the proliferation and poor physical condition of its estate. The authority's "revised" strategic plan was produced in October 1987 in the light of an independent consultants' review which was funded by the Welsh Office. On 23 October 1988, after extended public consultation, the health authority submitted the final draft plan to the Department for approval.

The plan proposes a major reorganisation of hospital services within the district with acute provision centred on three district general hospitals, namely the University hospital, Llandough and a new Cardiff Royal infirmary, to replace the existing hospital.

Supporting localised provision would be made in four neighbourhood hospitals, each of 85 beds. Their locations have not been finalised but they would be in the north, south, east and west of the district. Three specialist hospitals complete the picture—Whitchurch, Velindre and Ely. The proposals involve a number of consequential closures, each of which would be subject to a separate formal consultation process. One of these is the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar, which is proposed for closure in year seven of the plan. The plan envisages its replacement by beds at the proposed new Cardiff Royal infirmary. This proposal, together with the others contained in the strategic plan and the representations received, is currently the subject of detailed examination, and my right hon. Friend's decision will be announced at the earliest opportunity.

In conclusion, the health authority is at a relatively early stage of consideration of the options for the relocation of the service currently provided at the children's ward at Rhydlafar. It would therefore be premature to comment on either the merits of the proposals or the precise form that consultation will take. However, the authority will be meeting the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan community health councils later this month. Any comments should at this stage be addressed directly to the health authority or to one of the CHCs.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 11 May.

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 11 May.

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 8 May at seven o'clock.

SCRABSTER HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order, under section 7 of the Private Legislation (Scotland) Act 1930, relating to Scrabster Harbour; And the same was read the First time, and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday next and to be printed. [Bill 134.]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

1. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of underlying inflation in the British economy; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The underlying inflation rate, as measured by the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments, was 5·7 per cent. in March.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer accept that inflation, as measured by the RPI, is only one measure of the inflationary tendencies within the economy? Does he accept that the huge deterioration in our trade account and the fact that unit cost are rising faster than those of any of our competitors, are other indicators? Is not the underlying trend much higher than he has been prepared so far to admit?

Mr. Lawson: No, I do not accept at all that the underlying trend is higher than I have been prepared to admit, although I certainly accept that it is too high and that it is necessary to get it down. That is what the tightening of the monetary policy over the past year has been designed to achieve. I accept also that it is perfectly true, as the hon. Gentleman says, that the rise in imports is a sign of excessive pressure of domestic demand in this country. Again that is addressed by the same tighting of monetary policy and the raising of interest rates that has occurred and that is now clearly having an effect.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is only the policies of my right hon. Friend and the Government that give us any hope of reducing the present rate of inflation—both underlying and otherwise? If one were to incorporate any of the policies offered by the Opposition, the effect would be exactly the opposite. Inflation would go up.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. We do not know very much about the Opposition's policies. We have heard a few leaks. We understand that a little bit more is to be published quite shortly. I dare say that it will be as evasive and as elusive as what has been offered so far. Nevertheless, we are looking forward to it with great interest and we shall examine it very carefully. In the meantime, what we have to go on is the Opposition's record. Their record is clear. When they were in office, inflation averaged over 15 per cent.

Mr. Gordon Brown: But why is inflation twice what it was last year and twice what it was when the right hon. Gentleman became Chancellor of the Exchequer, pledged to eliminate it? Why is it that, even after housing costs are excluded, inflation is 50 per cent. higher than it was last year, when in Japan it is 1·2 per cent. and in Germany 2·7 per cent? Will the Chancellor tell us why his anti-inflationary policies have been so unsuccessful?

Mr. Lawson: The comparison that inflation is 50 per cent. higher than it was last year, is a rather absurd one. By the same token, the German inflation rate is 150 per cent.

higher than it was last year. In that case, according to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) we are clearly doing very much better than the Germans are. The phoney figures that he continually scatters across the Dispatch Box carry no weight at all and just make him something of a laughing stock. The reason for the rise in inflation is quite clear. It is that domestic demand has been rising excessively and that the money GDP has been rising excessively. I make no apology to the Opposition whatever, because the underlying rate of inflation today, even though it is far too high, is still lower than it was in the lowest month that the Opposition ever had during the whole of their period in office.

Business Investment

2. **Sir Michael Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of business investment in the economy.

Mr. Lawson: Business investment in 1988 was 14¼ per cent. higher in real terms than in 1987.

Sir Michael Shaw: Does not the continuing rapid rise in business investment underline a steady confidence in the actions and policies of my right hon. Friend? Does it not also point to a continuing confidence in the greater prospects for growth in business and employment in Britain in future?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. I am sure that he is absolutely right about the climate of long-term confidence that has been created in this country throughout business and industry, certainly given the continuance of the present Government, and that is of fundamental importance. Business investment has been one of the most encouraging aspects of the overall economic scene. Business investment now—that is, the figures for last year, the most recent ones we have—is now at the highest proportion of GDP that it has ever been since records began. Indeed, during the whole of the 1980s, total investment in this country has grown faster than in any other major European country.

Mr. David Howell: Is not one of the reasons for the current trade deficit the enormous growth in business investment in the economy? That means that our cities and our industries are being re-equipped and modernised at a fantastic rate. Given that for the past 20 years critics of British economic management have said that the one thing we really need is a rapid growth of investment, can my right hon. Friend begin to explain what on earth all the grumbling from the Opposition is about?

Mr. Lawson: My right hon. Friend asks a very good question, but I feel that it is not a question for me to answer. Perhaps it is a question for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). My right hon. Friend, who understands these matters very well, is absolutely right. It is striking, for example, that both last year and indeed the year before, the most rapid growth in all imports was in imports of capital goods. Capital goods are part of the investment boom and will provide increased capacity, increased growth and increased exports in the future.

Mr. John Smith: Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why the Government always seek to disguise the sad fact that on the latest available figures, investment in manufacturing industry is lower than it was in 1979? Is it not the case that the failure to invest in that crucial, tradeable sector of our economy is the main reason why we now face a horrendous balance of payments deficit, the biggest since records began?

Mr. Lawson: No, that is not so. Indeed, manufacturing industry is in a far stronger position than it has been for a very long time. It is striking that manufacturing output today is well up on what it was when we first took office, whereas when the Labour Government were in office, manufacturing output fell; it did not rise at all. As for investments, the quality of investment is also important —*[Interruption.]* Yes, and the quality of investment has improved immeasurably, as is seen by the rate of return on capital and the fact that manufacturing profits are higher than they have been for a very long time and total business investment—and all forms of investment matter, not just manufacturing investment which is part of the story but not the whole story—total business investment is a higher proportion of total output than ever before since records began.

Shareholders

3. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): Including holders of unit trusts, 10 million people own shares; 22 per cent. of the adult population.

Mr. Mans: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that increased share ownership is giving individuals a personal stake in the success of British industry? Will he encourage his right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Energy and for the Environment to include employee share ownership plans in the offers for sale of the electricity and water industries?

Mr. Brooke: I unhesitatingly answer yes to my hon. Friend's first question. As to his second question, the Government welcome the opportunity which privatisation of the water and electricity industries will provide for employees to take a stake in the future of their company. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister responsible for water announced on 15 March that there will be special share offer arrangements for employees of the new water plcs, which will include free matching priority and possibly discount share offers. Further details will be announced in due course. Arrangements for employees of the electricity supply industry will be announced at a suitable date closer to the flotations of the electricity companies.

Mr. Batterfill: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the recent opinion poll which shows that 20 per cent. of all adults in this country would be interested in buying electricity shares when the industry is privatised? That would amount to 6 million people, making it the most popular flotation ever achieved and one that is likely to be massively over-subscribed.

Mr. Brooke: I have not seen the opinion poll to which my hon. Friend refers, although I have heard about it. I share his endorsement and reaction to it.

Investment and Consumption

4. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the rate of growth of *(a)* total investment and *(b)* total consumption over the past seven years.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): In the seven years to 1988, total consumption grew, in real terms, by 25 per cent., while total investment grew over twice as fast—by 54 per cent.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that total investment has grown so much faster than consumption not only as a result of the level of confidence that business feels in the Government's economic policy, but as a reflection of the fact that there is some remaining overmanning from the grotesque levels that we inherited when we took office? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that it is a healthy feature of economies at this stage of development, such as those just ahead of us like America and Japan, that employment moves as a result of investment from manufacturing to the service sector?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is right about the confidence of industry. As my right hon. Friend said a moment ago, total investment is now higher as a proportion of gross domestic product than it has been for many years. On the future of manufacturing industry in particular, the Department of Trade and Industry investment intentions survey forecasts further investment growth in 1989 of 11 per cent. My hon. Friend is right on overmanning, but he should observe that not only has it fallen in many industries, but has done so at the same time as employment has grown in the service industries and in other industries.

Mr. Beith: Does the Chief Secretary realise that few people outside his own supporters—and not all of those—believe that the enormous switch in capacity from consumption to export will take place on a scale sufficient to wipe out our balance of trade deficit? Does he find it possible to believe that that will happen when world trade is expected to slow down? He is presuming that exports will rise 4 per cent. a year faster than imports.

Mr. Major: Invariably, there are Doubting Thomases about. We shall have to wait and see. Exports have been doing extremely well in recent years and there is every sign that that will continue. The hon. Gentleman will welcome that when it comes about for it will be a considerable achievement by British exporting industry.

Mr. Soames: Is my right hon. Friend able to quantify the proportion of the trade deficit that is accounted for in inward investment?

Mr. Major: There is a substantial amount of capital inward investment, which reflects, to a large degree, the confidence of external investors in the management of the British economy. On the balance of trade, a substantial part of the growth in the trade gap relates to the growth of investment in goods for production and investment.

International Monetary Fund

6. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund; and what was discussed.

19. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lawson: I attended the interim committee meeting of the IMF in Washington last month. Much of the discussion focused on international debt, where several countries, including the United States, had made new proposals. The committee agreed that the IMF should set aside a portion of its lending to help finance debt reduction in countries which are pursuing appropriate economic reforms, including in particular removing barriers to inward investment. But the committee also stressed that official creditors should not substitute for private lenders.

Mr. Burt: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. May I urge on him the need to continue the step-by-step, case by case analysis of the debtor countries, as he will recognise that there is strong support from Conservative Members for careful consideration and good giving to those countries which are doing their best to improve their economic position, but that there is no support for giving to countries that refuse to learn the economic facts of life?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The conditionality which has always been a part of IMF lending and of other international financial institution lending under the debt strategy is absolutely vital. If these countries are not going to take steps to put their own economic houses in order, really they will get nowhere at all and any lending will be completely fruitless. In many cases it is the conditions attached to the loans, as a result of IMF programmes which these countries have to implement, which are more important than the amount of money that is being lent itself. I realise that in many countries they feel that, politically, it is very difficult to take the measures that are necessary, but the plain fact is that unless those measures are taken, they are never going to get their economies to recover.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: While we all applaud the valuable efforts that have been made by the IMF in terms of Third world countries' debt reconstruction and relief and the considerable efforts made by my right hon. Friend in generating new ideas in that respect, will he treat with some scepticism the recent calls at the IMF sub-committee that quotas should be increased by up to 100 per cent., bearing in mind that at the moment IMF resources are at an all-time high?

Mr. Lawson: Yes, my hon. Friend is right. There is really no case—no objective case, no logical case—for a substantial increase in IMF quotas. The International Monetary Fund is fully able with its existing resources to continue to do what it is necessary for it to do and I pay tribute to the work that it does do in order to pursue the debt strategy. But it is wrong to talk soley, or even mainly, in terms nowadays of the IMF because the overwhelming problem that is being addressed at the present time is the problem of the big debts run up by Latin-American countries, which are overwhelmingly debts owed to commercial banks in the private sector. This is a matter which the commercial banks have got to sort out with the countries to whom they have lent the money and they are going to have to accept that the amount of debt has got to be reduced and they have got to make themselves responsible for that debt reduction.

Mr. Worthington: The Chancellor should face up to the fact that our contribution to the Third world has fallen from 0·59 per cent. to 0·28 per cent. during the period of this Government and that many Governments who are in desperate circumstances have had responsible policies. Although the greater environmental consciousness of the Government nowadays is to be welcomed, the fact is that there will be no future for people in this country or anywhere in the world unless we assist Third world countries to deal with environmental and population issues. The Government will be harshly judged in the future for their callous attitude towards assisting countries with much worse problems than our own. Does the Chancellor agree?

Mr. Lawson: No, I do not agree, not merely because we took the lead in the initiative to help the very poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa—the very poorest countries in the world—with their debt problems. But further than that, in the first place what matters even more than economic aid, although we give a substantial amount of aid, is investment in those countries. The United Kingdom invests more in private investment in developing countries than the whole of the rest of the European Community put together. That is our record and it is a very good one. I shall say one other thing to the hon. Gentleman who has asked that question, and to Opposition Members: the two things above all that they need are private overseas investment—the Labour party has always been hostile to overseas investment of any kind—and the other thing is to open our markets to the goods from those countries and, again, it is the Labour party that has always been hostile to that.

Mr. John Smith: What possible reason can the Chancellor give for halving overseas aid during the period of this Conservative Government? We are constantly told that the Government have an economic success, which many of us doubt, but if they do have an economic success, why can they not at least maintain the aid to the poorest countries instead of halving it, which the Chancellor must admit is what they have done?

Mr. Lawson: Economic aid has increased.

Rates (Increases)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the impact on the real personal disposable income of *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* others, of the latest rates increases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The information available on the domestic rate poundage as set by local authorities in England for 1989-90 indicates that average domestic rate bills have risen by 9·3 per cent. There is no information available on likely movements in real disposable income for particular groups between 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that high rates, which occur so often in Labour areas such as Ealing—where rates this year have gone up by no less than 32 per cent., added to the 65 per cent. increase of two years ago—damage pensioners and everybody else, including industry and employment? Although I welcome the fact that pensioners get pension increases well in line with inflation, they are severely damaged by the way in which the Labour party squitters their money away in great expenditure. Does my hon. Friend join me in that view?

Mr. Major: The message that my hon. Friend gives me is that he regards Ealing council as a loopy council. I am happy to join him in that condemnation. My figures for the rate increases were slightly different from those given by my hon. Friend. My understanding is that Ealing has budgeted to raise its spending by 16 per cent. in 1989-90, and the domestic rate bills have risen by 31 per cent. following a 72 per cent. rates increase only two years ago. That shows a substantial disregard for pensioners, who are in fact protected by the substantial rate rebates that we have provided for them.

Dr. Marek: Could the explanation be that this 9·3 per cent. increase that will have adverse effects on pensioners, as mentioned by the Chief Secretary, is brought about by the fact that, at current prices, rate support grant in 1987-88 was £10,059 million, and in 1988-89 it was only £9,687 million? Local authorities had no alternative but to make up for this increase in Government taxation in order to preserve services. Is this not yet another reason why taxation as a percentage of GDP is higher now under a Tory Government than it ever was under the previous Labour Administration, and why the Tory Government are the Government of high taxation.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, I despair for him. He will never persuade anyone else to believe that. He speaks for the party of high taxation, as I speak for the party of low taxation. I will explain to him why rates go up so much, and disproportionately, in Labour-controlled authorities. It is because they waste a good deal of their money, and they do not control it properly. It is as straightforward as that.

Sir Anthony Grant: If the daft proposals for rate reform, of a local income tax and capital value proposed by the Opposition were implemented in my constituency—and I think in that of my right hon. Friend—the burden would be more than twice as much as the community charge. Does my right hon. Friend agree?

Mr. Major: I understand that. That is not a unique proposition for, if many of the policies of the Opposition were carried out, the tax burden generally would go up dramatically for taxpayers as well.

Private Medical Treatment (Tax Relief)

8. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning his proposal to offer private medical tax relief.

Mr. Major: A number.

Mr. McKay: If the word "targeted" is not to appear as an emotional word giving the appearance of efficiency coupled with compassion, will the Minister explain to the House—and possibly to Back Bench Conservative Members, to whom it has not been explained sufficiently—how, under the guise of cutting child benefit and targeting those in greater need, he can logically at the same time advocate a policy of giving tax relief to those on medical insurance, as that seems to be targeted to the better off?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong about the proposal being targeted to the better off. The proposal before the House that I have no doubt we will debate shortly in Committee on the Finance Bill, to provide tax relief for medical insurance premiums, tackles a real problem. In a ring fence way it will help many elderly people who wish to continue medical insurance cover on retirement but who are unable to do because they have lost the benefit of the employer scheme. At the moment of retirement their income tends to fall and their premium tends to rise. We are seeking to retain the capacity for these people to sustain and retain the medical insurance they have previously had. That is entirely fair and reasonable, and I support it thoroughly.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the likely savings in public expenditure will exceed the cost to the Treasury of the tax relief itself when it is fully running? Has my right hon. Friend noticed that the Labour Members are celebrating a decade of Thatcherism by trying to ditch their own vote-losing policies and adopt a pale pink version of ours? How long will it be before they adopt this policy also?

Mr. Major: It is certainly true that, as my hon. Friend said, the Opposition have learnt that there is a sea change in attitude in this country, and they tend to tack behind it. It will certainly be another decade or more before they are remotely likely to form a Government of any sort. I reiterate what I said a moment ago. I agree that this measure is likely to prove a very good bargain for the taxpayer.

Mr. Madden: How can the Chief Secretary justify poor pensioners having to apply for means-tested benefits when rich pensioners who apply for medical tax relief will not even have to fill in an application form?

Mr. Major: The justification is that we provide benefits for those pensioners who need them. The hon. Gentleman should welcome that.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this move affects a relatively small number of people who have been receiving tax relief on private medical insurance? Does he agree that they with to continue with private medical insurance, but are mystified about why Opposition Members wish to deny it to them, and regard the Opposition's announcements as mean-minded and rather tawdry?

Mr. Major: It is certainly true that, at the moment, a small number of pensioners are elegible to benefit—about 600,000 to 700,000. There is no mystery about the Opposition's hostility to private provision and self-provision. It is traditional.

Mr. Chris Smith: Has the Chief Secretary seen the response of the Royal College of Nursing, which describes the proposal as having no economic, social or medical justification? Instead of providing tax subsidies to those few who are rich enough and well enough to benefit from private medical insurance, should not the Government spend the money on basic, desperately needed improvements to the Health Service as a whole, for the benefit of all pensioners?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman might have been on a different planet for the past year. He may not have noticed that, in the last public expenditure round, the National Health Service had its largest ever increase in resources, of £2·5 billion. A further £2·5 billion was agreed last year for next year's increase in the National Health Service provision, and that is before we re-examine the matter in the public expenditure round next autumn. The Labour party never provided remotely the same amount of facilities for the National Health Service.

Manufacturing Productivity

9. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing productivity in the economy.

Mr. Brooke: Productivity in United Kingdom manufacturing grew in the three months to February 1989 by 6¼ per cent. on a year earlier.

Mr. Wardle: Is it the case that, for most of the 1980s, growth in manufacturing productivity has been faster in this country than in the other G7 countries, whereas, in the mid to late 1970s, we were at the bottom of the league? If growth in productivity is to continue, will it not require sane pay settlements, competitive manning levels, and sustained investment in new technology?

Mr. Brooke: I can confirm the figures which my hon. Friend quoted. If he were to take the comparison back to 1960-70, he would also be accurate. I endorse also what he suggested as a recipe for continuing success.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister accept that manufacturing productivity is an inadequate test of economic success? Car companies such as Rover and Ford, which have improved manufacturing productivity, have been unable to meet current demands using component manufacturers in this country because of their lack of investment over the past 10 years. The improvement in manufacturing productivity in Ford and Rover has led to the sucking in of imports, principally from Europe.

Mr. Brooke: I would be the first to agree with the hon. Gentleman that manufacturing productivity is not the end of the story. The story which I told was an outstanding one —one in which I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would have taken pleasure in terms of the achievements of this economy.

CBI

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet the director general of the Confederation of British Industry; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend meets the director general of the CBI from time to time, and a wide range of matters are discussed.

Mr. Cran: Does not my right hon. Friend agree that British management must continue to resist excessive wage claims such as we are beginning to see, if for no other reason than the need to continue to improve our international competitiveness? Does he agree, further, that management must show leadership and ensure also that their own snouts are not too deeply in the pay trough?

Mr. Major: I am not sure that I would put the second part of my hon. Friend's question in precisely that way, but I certainly agree with the underlying sentiment. I do not defend unustifiably high salary increases, whether for directors or for the work force. That should be clear. On his substantive point, there must be a clear danger to industry and competitiveness if wage costs outstrip productivity growth. It is an important function of management to make sure that they do not.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: When the right hon. Gentleman meets the director general, will he explain to him something that he himself seems to be reluctant to accept —that is, how he hopes to reduce the balance of payments to a reasonable level with a high pound and high interest rates?

Mr. Major: I am bound to say to the right hon. Gentleman, in terms of the strength of sterling, that it is a matter of record that some of the countries with the strongest exchange rates over a lengthy period—Japan springs immediately to mind—have an extremely good exporting performance.

Mr. Jack: When my right hon. Friend next meets the CBI, will he discuss the encouraging trends towards higher levels of exports from the United Kingdom? Will he give industry every assistance to increase the amount and value of our exports?

Mr. Major: We are certainly delighted to see the increasing trend in exports. We wish that to continue. The most important thing that we can do for industry, whether in regard to exports or internal sales, is to get firm control of inflation. That is central to our policy.

Mrs. Fyfe: When the Minister next meets the director general of the CBI, will he place on the agenda the concern of the Equal Opportunities Commission about the taxation of workplace nurseries? Will he further tell the tigress that her cubs were better looked after than the vast majority of working women's children are after 10 years of the tigress being at No. 10?

Mr. Major: That may well be a matter that the director general would wish to discuss. I shall bear the hon. Lady's comments in mind.

World Bank

11. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the World Bank; and what was discussed.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor met the president of the World Bank in London on 26 April; discussion covered a wide range of issues.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Did my right hon. Friend emphasise the importance of encouraging underdeveloped countries to attract private capital investment to assist in their development?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to emphasise that point, which was mentioned earlier today by my right hon. Friend. The United Kingdom has an exceptionally good record on this. Over the last five years, direct private investment, which is of immense value to underdeveloped countries, from this country totalled £6·6 billion, averaging £1·3 billion a year. That is the best help that this country can give many developing countries.

Miss Lestor: Noting the fact that official Government aid as a proportion of GNP has fallen from 0·52 per cent. under Labour to 0·28 per cent. under this Government, which represents a loss in real terms of 20 per cent.—I wish the Chancellor would listen, because he got his figures wrong—will he bear in mind the week after next, when discussing the replenishment of the World Bank international development assistance, the fact that it is important that donor nations give generously? Will he support the growing demand that IDA loans should be converted into grants? Will he pursue that policy for all future assistance to the poorest countries?

Mr. Lilley: I know that the hon. Lady takes a great interest in these matters: indeed, I have discussed them with her. I do not think that she is correct in assuming that the total benefit or even the major benefit that this country can give underdeveloped countries is limited to official aid. I know that she will join me in welcoming the fact that Britain was the first country to pay in full its contribution to the recent increase in the general capital increase of the World Bank, which is on the lines of the sort of thing that she was welcoming. I would place even greater emphasis on the importance of encouraging trade and private investment in developing countries.

Mr. Hind: Next time our right hon. Friend meets representatives of the World Bank, will he ask them to consider which of the two major parties in this country is likely to close the gap between our exports and imports and therefore make Britain a much stronger economy—one with record levels of investment and one with productivity four times larger than that of the last Labour Government or the one with the crackpot policies of the Opposition?

Mr. Lilley: I expect that my right hon. Friend will cover a wide range of subjects, including those mentioned. He will, of course, want to reassure the leader of the World Bank that Britain will not have a trade policy that seeks to rectify a balance of payments situation by excluding trade with the underdeveloped countries, as is often the wish of the Opposition.

Personal Disposable Income

13. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average rate of growth of real personal disposable income since 1983.

Mr. Brooke: Real personal disposable income has grown by 3 per cent. per year, on average, since 1983.

Mr. Atkinson: How much have real incomes increased since 1979? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that since 1979 the British people have enjoyed greater prosperity than ever before in our history thanks to the economic policies of—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Brooke: I can confirm exactly the effect that my hon. Friend was seeking to achieve at that precise moment.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that taxation rates at the higher level are a critical factor in judging whether the entrepreneurial spirit will exist in

society? Does he agree that rates at the top level of 50 per cent. and abolition of the cut-off point for national insurance are likely to damage the entrepreneurial spirit and have a long-term adverse effect on the economy? Is he aware that that is the latest policy statement of the Labour party?

Mr. Brooke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is a tribute to both my right hon. Friends that the effect of 10 years of this Government has been to produce a reduction from 83 per cent. to 50 per cent. in the thinking of the Opposition.

Take-home Pay

14. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the real take-home pay of a man on average male earnings between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Brooke: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on average male earnings is expected to be 31 per cent. higher in 1989-90 than in 1978-79.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most significant features of that unprecedented improvement are that the benefits have been enjoyed by people at every level of income and that over the past six years real disposable personal income has grown at a rate of more than 3 per cent. per annum?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend shows by his question that he knows even more about the subject than I do. However, I entirely confirm to the British people his very welcome figures.

Interest Rates (Small Businesses)

16. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of interest rate rises since 1988 on small businesses.

Mr. Lilley: Inflation is the greatest threat to the prosperity of small businesses, which will therefore greatly benefit from the Government's firm anti-inflationary policy.

Mr. Garrett: Does the Minister not agree that what he has stated is exactly the statement made by the Small Business Research, Trust? Having said that, will he not do anything about it. One of the biggest problems facing small businesses is debt collecting. Will the brains of the Treasury think of some way in which the larger companies can pay their debts on time to the small businesses which operate for their benefit?

Mr. Lilley: I am not at all surprised, and I welcome the fact that the Small Business Bureau endorses our attitude towards inflation and not that of the Opposition. Perhaps, that is because we have been successful in encouraging the growth of new businesses. During the past year, the number of businesses trading has increased by more than 1,200 every week. On the question of debts suffered by small businesses, the scheme that we introduced in the Budget before last has been a great help to the small companies which have chosen to take advantage of it.

Inflation

17. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to achieve his target of zero inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The Government's ultimate objective remains price stability. The medium term financial strategy assumes that the annual rate of inflation in the GDP deflator will be down to 2½ per cent. by 1992-93, consistent with its objectives for money GDP.

Mr. Gow: Could my hon. Friend accelerate the meaning of the word "ultimate"? Will he please ensure that the policy of the Treasury is to bring about that policy which is attainable—zero inflation and no rises in prices?

Mr. Lilley: I agree with my hon. Friend both as to the destination and as to the route, but I cannot give him a different timetable.

Mr. Barron: Have the past 10 years been worth it for a reduction of 2 per cent.?

Mr. Lilley: It has been immensely worthwhile to get rid of a rate of inflation that averaged 15 per cent. under the last Labour Government and which has reached 5 per cent. since 1983.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Prime Minister accept that many of us who do not share her views, nevertheless acknowledge that it is a considerable achievement to be in No. 10 for 10 years? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Does she also accept that many people feel that she is now going too far and that she only listens to people whom she describes as "one of us"? Would it not be better for the country and for her if, in future, she went around with her eyes and ears open and her mouth shut?

The Prime Minister: Then why does the hon. Gentleman ask me a question so that I have to open my mouth to answer it?

Mrs. Ann Winterton: May I ask my right hon. Friend, as one grandmother to another, whether she agrees that the stability of our society is based greatly upon the strength of the family unit? Does she further agree that, when we reform our present outdated Sunday trading law, we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater, but should retain the traditional character of the British Sunday as a family day for rest, recreation and corporate Christian worship?

The Prime Minister: I think that we must form a grandparents club in the House of Commons. I think that there would be rather a lot of people in it—and all of them would agree with my hon. Friend that the importance of the family is vital to the health of our society and that it is

vital to uphold it. *[Interruption.]* The family existed as a unit in society long before there was such a thing as child benefit, because people took responsibility for their own families.

With regard to Sunday trading, I think that my hon. Friend will agree that the present law is not fair and not consistent; however, I hope that, before any Bill was ever brought in, there would be virtual agreement in the House on what it should contain.

Mr. Kinnock: Would the Prime Minister be good enough to recall for us today the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi?

The Prime Minister: I think that one has achieved that prayer and brought a great deal of harmony where there was a fantastic amount of discord under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Kinnock: It bears repeating:

"Where there is discord may we bring harmony,
Where there is error may we bring truth,
Where there is doubt may we bring faith,
Where there is despair may we bring hope".

Can the Prime Minister tell us why, in 10 years, she has failed to live up to a single one of those principles?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will remember the discord in the winter of discontent of 1979, when, under Socialism, there were strikes in the hospitals and one could not even get the dead buried. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will realise that there is now faith in Britain overseas—*[Interruption.]*—and perhaps he will realise that the social services are at a level of efficiency and generosity which has brought hope and a higher standard of living than people have ever known before.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the last thing this country needs is a national dock strike, a strike which would lead to imports being held up and coming in after the strike was over, thereby damaging our export potential? *[Interruption.]* Does she recall that, when national dock strikes and other strikes which damaged the economy took place under Labour, the Conservative party supported the then Government in opposing them? What does she think of the statement made by Labour Members that, if there was a strike, they would have to support it?

The Prime Minister: I earnestly hope with my hon. Friend that there will not be a strike. The national dock labour scheme is being abolished so that the ports to which it at present applies can have a much more prosperous future when it has gone, as can all the people who work in industries in the hinterland. It will be greatly to their advantage. Any strike on behalf of the dock labour scheme would bear extremely heavily on all the other people in the economy who work steadily and well to produce Britain's prosperity and the prosperity of their families.

Q3. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Garrett: The House will have noted that the Prime Minister splurged about patriotism when replying to the previous question. Is the right hon. Lady aware that there are many anniversaries this year, including one that I consider to be important—the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Council of Europe? Tomorrow, Finland will be the 23rd country to join.

Will the Prime Minister ensure that the vast Government public relations machine highlights the importance of that organisation relative to the other organisation which I can hardly bear to mention but which is based in Brussels? Is she aware that the Council of Europe, which is composed of 177 elected Members of Parliament from the countries concerned, of which Britain has 18, can do infinitely more for the general well-being of this country than can the European Economic Community? Is she further aware that, for that reason, many of our interests in the broader spectrum of Europe coincide with the 23 rather than with the 12?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for those remarks. I agree that the Council of Europe represents a far wider swathe of Europe than does the Community and that it does an excellent job. I particularly pay tribute to the work done by hon. Members of this House in the Council of Europe, which is also particularly active in human rights and in keeping contact with many countries which would otherwise feel left out of the European Community. I share the hon. Gentleman's sentiments, and I thank him for expressing them.

Q4. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the way in which the strength of the economy has helped the sick and the disabled, whose real benefits have nearly doubled in the last decade? Does she agree that much more work lies ahead, especially to help find families where needed for the 5,600 handicapped children still in institutional care?

The Prime Minister: I agree that greater prosperity has enabled us to do far more for the disabled. Indeed, when we came to office, expenditure on the disabled was £1·8 billion a year. It is now £7·3 billion, and helps many more people. In particular, the mobility allowance has been made non-taxable. We have increased spending on the mobility allowance by nearly six times.

With regard to finding new families for handicapped children, I should like to pay tribute to what my hon. Friend has done and to the great lead that he has taken on the matter. Grants have been made to a number of voluntary agencies, in particular to the British Agency for Adoption and Fostering, which next week launches a new family-finding campaign entitled "Families Forever". We wish it well in this great work.

Q5. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: Will the Prime Minister tell us what the British balance of payments position was in 1979, and what it is likely to be in 1989? How proud is she of the change that she has brought about?

The Prime Minister: I am very proud indeed of the fact that this country has overseas assets of enormous dimensions, which have gone up over the past 10 years and which, together with economic policies, enable people to keep confidence in this country, and enable us to import many goods for higher investment to give higher productivity in future. That is a situation that was never attained under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Gorst: During the course of her busy day, will my right hon. Friend have time to address herself to what she might be able to announce to the House on 4 May 1999 as her major achievements in the next 10 years?

The Prime Minister: Not today, but I hope very soon to be giving some thought to that prospect.

Q6. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sillars: May I refer the Prime Minister to her earlier remarks about the increased overseas aid given by Britain? Is she aware that that does not apply to the colony of Hong Kong? Will the right hon. Lady acknowledge that there has been a serious breach of our moral obligations to the Chinese population in Hong Kong? Will she and the Government seriously take on board a review of the present policy, which denies those people the fundamental right of a vote in a democratic country?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted that the hon. Member seems to think that in Scotland there is much greater faith in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sillars: That is not a reply.

The Prime Minister: Ah, but it is a reply. The hon. Member did not say that Scotland lacked faith in the future of the United Kingdom, and I quite understand why, because Scotland has benefited enormously from a higher standard of living. I am so glad to recognise that, on this our 10th anniversary.

The lease on Hong Kong ends in 1997 and we did extremely well to negotiate an agreement with China to keep the present capitalist regime going for the next 50 years. I believe that that is much welcomed in Hong Kong. The hon. Gentleman must have run out of original ideas, because he repeats the same question that he has asked before, and I give him the same answer.

Q7. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: In view of the appalling incompetence and maladministration of the European Commission revealed by the Court of Auditors' report, does not my right hon. Friend agree that it is extraordinary that it should seek to extend its activities to language training and to the medium-term transport infrastructure fund? Does she not feel that it would be better employed looking after the matters for which it already has responsibility, in particular, removing the barriers to takeover bids that presently exist in the European Community?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that we need to be on our guard against the Commission's attempts to extend existing Community competence into new areas. That seems to happen a lot at present. I agree with him that one area where it could usefully make more use of its existing powers would be in ensuring fair competition in Europe. For example, a number of countries still give heavy subsidies to industry, although they pay lip service to fair competition. Italy, Germany and France still give heavy subsidies to industry, and if they really believe in fair competition in 1992, those subsidies will have to go. More effective use of existing powers and competence should have priority over trying to extend that competence or dreaming up yet more institutions.

Mr. Alfred Morris: If the NHS White Paper is such a huge success, as the Prime Minister persists in claiming, why was the visit of the Secretary of State for Health to the Vale of Glamorgan such a disastrous flop? Does the right hon. Lady still expect her 10th anniversary to be marked by victory in the vale?

The Prime Minister: I hope that we shall achieve victory in the vale. We deserve it. I hope that one factor will be the Government's excellent record on the Health Service. As I pointed out at Question Time on Tuesday, for every £1 spent on the NHS by the previous Labour Government, this Government have spent £3. There are more doctors and nurses and they are better paid, more patients are treated and each doctor has a smaller list. The right hon. Gentleman should help us to put the facts across instead of the fiction released by the Opposition.

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Speaker: There has been a resurgence in the number of open questions being tabled to departmental Ministers. The practice has been that the Chair will not call supplementaries to questions to a departmental Minister about that Minister's meetings or visits which do not state their purpose reasonably precisely. That has most frequently occurred on questions about future meetings or visits, but it equally extends to questions about past events, especially when it appears from the Minister's original answer that no recent meeting or visit of the kind mentioned in the question has taken place.

I exercised some latitude in allowing supplementary questions on some borderline questions of that kind yesterday and today, but with the great congestion that we now have at Question Time nearly every day, it would be advantageous if I ceased to call supplementary questions on such questions, in the hope that they will cease to be tabled.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I ask a question about some meetings next week? Will the Leader of the House tell us what the business will be for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 8 MAY—Timetable motion on the Dock Work Bill.

Motion to take note of EC document on smoking in public places. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 9 MAY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance Bill.

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY—Consideration in Committee of the Finance Bill.

At the end on Wednesday, motion relating to the personal equity plan regulations.

THURSDAY 11 MAY—There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555).

FRIDAY 12 MAY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 15 MAY—Until Seven o'clock, private Members' motions.

The Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

[Debate on Monday 8 May:
Relevant European Community Document
4225/89 plus Corrigendum Smoking in public places
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee—HC15-xvii (1988-89) para 3.]

Mr. Dobson: I start by registering the Opposition's deepest objections to the guillotine motion on the Dock Work Bill. The Bill was produced with no warning to anyone, on the same day that the White Paper on the dock work scheme was printed. It was rushed into the House and now, apparently, it is to be rushed to a guillotine. The Leader of the House introduced a record number of guillotine motions in the previous parliamentary Session and it looks as though he is trying to break his own record.

I go on from that to welcome the debate in Government time on the future of the National Health Service, for which we have been asking for a long time. But when shall we have a Government statement and a debate on the report on care in the community, because there is a clear relationship between proposals for caring for people in the community and any changes in the NHS?

In addition, when are we likely to have the long-promised debate on the Government's proposal to substitute student loans for student grants?

Finally, let me go back to a request that I made a week or two ago for a debate on the growing public concern over Government and public bodies' spending on publicity and advertising. In particular, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the chairman of the Tory party to come to the House to tell us when the Tory party will pay back to the water rate payers of the Thames water authority area the money that they paid to put an advertisement in the Conservative document advertising 10 years of this dishonest Government?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me five questions about the business for next week. He first, as I would expect him to do, registered his disagreement with the proposal for a timetable motion on the Dock Work Bill, but he has to recognise that his hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said during the Second Reading debate,

"The Bill involves just one proposal".— [*Official Report*, 17 April 1989; vol. 151, c. 62.]

I recognise that it is a proposal which the Opposition are committed to resist by all means at their disposal, but in view of this I think it sensible, at a relatively early stage in the Committee, to seek to draw up a timetable for future debate. I shall be tabling the motion later today and I can tell the House that it will allow a very generous amount of time for consideration of the Bill both in Committee and when it returns to the Floor of the House.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for thanking me for arranging the debate on the Health Service next week, which will take place on a Government motion. He referred again to the Griffiths report but, as I said last week, we have recently had a debate on this issue. I do not rule out the possibility of a further debate but I do not think it would be sensible to have another debate in the near future as the Government have not yet reached final conclusions on its proposals on this matter.

With regard to student loans, again, I have told the hon. Gentleman that the best time for a debate will be when the current discussions with the financial institutions have been concluded, and that is not yet.

With regard to the last point, I know that the hon. Gentleman has been trying quite hard to stir up a certain amount of interest in this matter of money spent on publicity but, as he well knows, these matters are covered by very strict rules and I reject entirely the view that the Government do not stick strictly to the rules that have been agreed.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 348?

[That this House deplores the animal suffering caused by the uncontrolled growth in the dog population, resulting in the destruction of an estimated 1,000 dogs in the United Kingdom every day; seeks to promote responsible dog ownership and to reduce the number of unwanted and abandoned stray dogs; is concerned about the cost in social and financial terms of environmental pollution and of accidents caused by dogs, and of attacks on livestock by dogs; supports the establishment of a nationwide dog warden service dedicated to the protection and control of dogs; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to implement a national dog registration scheme as it is empowered to do under Clause 37 of the Local Government Act 1988.]

It has been signed by 233 hon. Members from all parts of the House and refers to the dog registration scheme. I remind my right hon. Friend that this is national pet week. We have a reputation for being animal lovers in this country and yet 1,000 healthy dogs are destroyed every day in the United Kingdom. I wonder, therefore, whether my right hon. Friend could find time next week to debate this important issue.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern, but the Government have made it clear that they do not consider that a registration scheme would do anything to assist dog welfare or control. I have to tell my hon. Friend that there are no plans to implement section 37. I recognise his concern about a debate, but I cannot promise him one in the immediate future.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House has, on a number of occasions when defending the introduction of guillotine motions, referred to the precedent set by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) when he guillotined five Bills in one day. Does the right hon. Gentleman see some future Government of a different hue using as a precedent the guillotining of the Dock Work Bill after only 25 hours of debate in Committee, or are they so drunk on the anniversary spirit that they believe that this Government will go on for ever and ever?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, if he was present yesterday and listened to the speech by his hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie), will know that she indicated that she would prefer guillotines to be brought in earlier even than I bring them in.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Can the Leader of the House take early action to stop next week's business being frustrated or unduly delayed by filibusters from silly busters? Can he also give an assurance that next week he will not seek on Friday, as he did last Friday, to restrict the discussion of important Euro-measures to one and a half hours on the one day when there is plenty of time for discussing them? Will he bear in mind the Prime Minister's important words about the need to give more time to these Euro-measures and not to restrict the time unduly?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises a number of points but I must deal first with the debate yesterday. I would have thought that that had done more to stop it happening again than anything else. While it was an achievement to speak for four hours, it was an even greater achievement to be quite so boring for that length of time.

As my hon. Friend knows, I am not happy about the way in which the House deals with European legislation, and that view is held by many other people. I am having discussions to find out how the House would like the scrutiny of European legislation to be improved. I hope that it will not be too long before we have helpful suggestions from many people, including the Chairman of the Procedure Committee and the Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee—both of which Committees are examining that issue.

As to last Friday's motion, I do not consider that we slipped anything through. It seems to me that we tabled that motion in the proper fashion. The House approved it, which I think is excellent.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Reverting to the subject of the Dock Work Bill, can the Leader of the House cite any precedent outside an emergency or an emergency powers Bill when a guillotine was introduced within three weeks of publication of the Bill itself? Are not the Government's action adding insult to injury? What kind of response does the right hon. Gentleman expect from the dock workers of this country?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who is sitting just to the hon. Gentleman's left, when he was Leader of the House, introduced a guillotine after the Second Reading of one Bill, so I do not think that my action is unprecedented.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend join me in encouraging right hon. and hon. Members having ideas about European legislation and how the House should deal with it to extend their thinking to the Procedure Committee, which at this moment is trying to find ways in which it can assist right hon. and hon. Members and the House generally to give greater consideration to European matters?

Mr. Wakeham: Provided that that is not an invitation to right hon. and hon. Members who would like to take all European legislation out to the North sea and sink it, I agree to my hon. Friend's request. The restrictions are such that we cannot find a great deal more time to debate European legislation, but we can find a way of using the existing time more effectively.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): This morning, the Prime Minister said on early morning TV that over the past 10 years the Government have improved the quality of people's lives. Can the House have an early debate on precisely that point? The Prime Minister can then explain how the quality of life has improved for those people who sleep each night in cardboard boxes because they are homeless. She can also explain to the House how the unemployed in my constituency and in other parts of the country are much better off under the present Government. She can explain how people's lives have been improved by cuts in social security benefits. She can explain how the Government have destroyed the nation's stability. The worst crime of all is that they have destroyed the stability of the nation. The Prime Minister should come to the House and explain those matters, so that we may challenge her and give the opposite view—rather than the right hon. Lady going on some nonsensical TV programme in the early morning.

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about the views that he expresses in the House. However, if he will examine the business for virtually the whole of next week, he will find that every one of the measures proposed by the Government is about improving the quality of life. I refer to the Finance Bill, and to our proposals for the National Health Service and for improving the efficiency of the docks. They are all about improving the quality of life, so I reject the hon. Gentleman's assertions.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a White Paper on changes in structure plans has still not been presented? Does he agree that there must be a debate before the Government introduce legislation on that subject? If so, when will that debate take place?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of that subject and acknowledge that my hon. Friend has addressed me about it on more than one occasion. I wish that I could be more forthcoming. I cannot promise a debate early in the future, but I shall certainly bear his point in mind.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 638, signed by 136 hon. Members, which deals with the de-recognition of trade union rights by Midland bank.

[That this House condemns the Midland Bank for unilaterally withdrawing bargaining and representative rights from the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union and regards this as a denial of civil liberties and the rights of the employees concerned in that they are unable to be represented by the union of their choice; and calls upon the Midland Bank, as a so-called listening bank, to listen to its employees and to reverse this unwarranted, controversial decision forthwith and to return to the non-confrontational, co-operative industrial relations which it previously enjoyed with the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that people should have a right to join a trade union of their choice, that there should be a right to recognition for that union, and that the listening bank is not listening to its employees? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to make an early statement?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly cannot promise that and, from the mutterings that I hear from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, I do not think that he is very much in the mood. It is entirely for employers to decide which union, if any, they wish to recognise for collective bargaining purposes. I see nothing wrong with that at all.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my right hon. Friend share the concern of many Devonians and other people in the west country, in particular that of my constituents, about the outflow of untreated raw sewage into the sea? Does he agree that the subject merits early debate before the privatisation of the water companies? Will he give urgent consideration to having such a debate as soon as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend an early debate. I recognise that it is an important subject. However, a great many of the provisions in the Water Bill are designed, in the main, to improve the quality of our water.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House find time for an urgent debate on manufacturing? Will he tell his Front Bench colleagues to stop pretending that a trade deficit in manufacturing, which it is forecast will amount to between £18 billion and £20 billion by the end of the year, is not serious? It is very serious and it matters to this country. When the oil runs out, how on earth shall we earn our living without a decent manufacturing base?

Mr. Wakeham: I should have thought that the hon. Lady, with her usual ingenuity, would be able to make some of those points in the debates next week on the Finance Bill, but that is not a matter for me. Her view of the trade deficit is perhaps a bit one-sided. I do not think that she recognises, for instance, that three quarters of the trade deficit arises from investment in productive equipment and from improving the manufacturing facilities of our country. That is something which was not achieved under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the one area in which the last 10 years of Conservative Government have been a conspicuous failure—the failure to do anything about the indescribably filthy approach to this place in the underpass under Bridge street? It has gone on for years. At a time when the tourist industry is beginning to get into full gear, once again tourists are faced with what looks like a Third world country's pathetic attempt to clean up the approaches to the centre of democracy. Will he do something about it, please?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend's analysis that there is too much litter about. I am not sure whether my responsibilities for organising next week's business quite fit into dealing with that matter, but I shall make inquiries and find out whether I have any responsibilities for it.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Since the right hon. Gentleman seems so eager to cite precedents to defend his action over the guillotine, could I ask him to respond to the invitation that I have given to him on many previous occasions—I am sure that he must clinch the matter now, in view of what he has previously said—to hold a debate so that the House can see exactly what is the contrast between the measures that we introduced, for which I was responsible, and the right hon. Gentleman's far more frequent guillotines? Many more guillotines have been introduced by him than were introduced by any previous Government. Does the right hon. Gentleman not recognise that it is particularly offensive to impose a guillotine on the dock labour scheme, since the Government completely refused to hold any negotiations whatsoever with the unions concerned before the Bill was introduced?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman is a formidable debater, but it seems to me that he will need all his skills if he is to develop the case that he developed earlier this week, that a lame duck Labour Government, of which he was a member, had a greater moral right to insist on getting their measures through Parliament than that of a Government who have achieved three decisive popular victories in a row. The right hon. Gentleman's theory, that the less support one has the more Bills one should be able to guillotine, is certainly a novel interpretation of the constitution.

What is more—I have some more news for the right hon. Gentleman—he will be on very shaky ground indeed if he presumes in the debate that he is urging me to hold to teach business management to me. He is the only Leader of the House since the war to have lost a guillotine motion. We all remember his guillotine days in 1976, when he could not get one of his Bills through, even with a guillotine.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Now that the Bar Council, the Law Society, the Society of Apothecaries and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all have had their say about the Lord Chancellor's proposals for the reform of legal services, which I personally support, when will the House of Commons have a chance?

Mr. Wakeham: We had a debate late at night on the Lord Chancellor's salary order. Apart from my own, I thought that my hon. Friend made the only other sensible speech.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Leader of the House aware that this year we are

celebrating a vitally important anniversary—the year of photography? What initiatives do the Government plan this year? If they have no suggestions, will the right hon. Gentleman consider allowing still photography in this place? If we are to have television, it seems ludicrous to allow television and not still photography, particularly when there are very fine and brilliant photo-journalists in Britain. Led by *The Independent* and followed by others, there is very sympathetic treatment of photography in newspapers. Will the Leader of the House produce some suggestions, not necessarily today but perhaps next week?

Mr. Wakeham: The first thing I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is certainly giving the photographers of the world plenty of practice in taking good family snaps at the moment. I agree that his point is a serious one. The Select Committee considering the televising of our proceedings is examining these matters and it would be quite wrong for me to give my views as to how that Select Committee should reach its conclusions in its report, which it hopes to do very soon. However, the hon. Gentleman has raised a serious point which we shall have to consider carefully.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I very much support the recent application by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) for a debate on the past 10 years under my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Such a debate would give us the opportunity to explain to the nation how in those 10 years we have given power to parents, trade union members and council tenants. We have attracted inward investment and changed people's attitudes so that young people now want to run their own businesses. We could also explain how people now want to own shares in the company in which they work, and how difficult we find it to help people when they have the handicap of a Labour-controlled council.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), although I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman sees it in quite the same way. However, I do not see a way of finding time for a special debate on the points he raises, although a number of them could well be made in the business already set down for next week.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I urge the Leader of the House to think again about arranging that debate on the past 10 years. Perhaps it would give the Opposition the opportunity to raise questions about the increasing public squalor of hospitals being closed, homes not being built, public cleaning not being properly financed, unemployment having doubled, inflation rising rapidly, at twice the rate of our industrial competitors, homelessness having gone through the roof and many other issues. Will the right hon. Gentleman think again, as we would welcome a debate on the past 10 years?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there is popular support for such a debate. We all have our own statistics to quote on such occasions, but I am not moved. I cannot find time to arrange such a debate next week.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend look at early-day motion 767?

[That this House strongly deplores the proposed all out strike of London Underground staff from 8th May with the severe inconvenience and suffering it will cause for the London public and the economy of London; and urges all concerned to think again and to continue to try to resolve their problems round the negotiating table, remembering that no problem is too large to be insoluble by responsible and fair negotiations.]

It tackles the serious matter of the proposed Underground strike for next Monday, which will cause huge damage to the economy of London and huge inconvenience and suffering to Londoners. Can we have an early debate or a statement, whether or not the strike takes place?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly welcome the motion and I regret that there may be industrial action, rather than negotiation. Of course, the resolution of the dispute is a matter for the board and management, but I hope that the unions will take into consideration the many millions of people who have to use the Underground and think again before taking industrial action.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would next week be a good time for a debate on the quality of life in Whitehall? On a minor matter, can the Leader of the House explain how an Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office can appear on the BBC and talk about disallowed private notice questions, when the rest of us certainly cannot? Can he explain why it is that so mighty a personage as Mr. Bernard Ingham now refuses to meet the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, which wants some kind of code of ethics? Can he tell us whether we can assume that it is now all right for a private secretary to the Prime Minister to authorise the improper disclosure of Law Officers' letters?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing further to add on the bulk of the hon. Gentleman's questions, except to say that I cannot arrange a debate on them next week.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On the subject of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), does my right hon. Friend recall that the right hon. Gentleman was only able to impose his will——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must be about a debate next week.

Mr. Leigh: We have a guillotine debate next week, Mr. Speaker. I was simply recalling that the right hon. Gentleman could impose his will on England simply because of his majority in Scotland. Does that not drive a coach and horses through the argument that English Members such as myself should not be allowed to vote on Scottish matters? Those who live by the unitary guillotine should die by it.

Mr. Wakeham: I am most reluctant to bring forward guillotine motions at any time because it is better that debates are settled by negotiation. However, they have to be brought forward by all Governments, and a unitary Parliament means that every hon. Member can vote on them equally.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Leader of the House consider a debate next week on the intolerable situation in Cleveland, and elsewhere, where there are delays of up to eight months before Department of Social Security leaflets reach voluntary sector outlets, from which people can learn what benefits are available? I asked the right hon. Gentleman a question about that two months

[Ms. Marjorie Mowlam]

ago and I would appreciate it if he did not advise that I write to the relevant Minister or ask a private notice question because I have obtained no information from those sources, short of being told that citizens advice bureaux have a special relationship and can obtain the information in a couple of days. Other organisations, such as housing trusts and agencies for the disabled, need that information so that people who need benefits can obtain them. This intolerable situation should be dealt with quickly.

Mr. Wakeham: I promise the hon. Lady that I shall look into the matter as soon as I leave the Chamber.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Notwithstanding the remarks of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who has been noticeable by his absence from the Dock Work Bill Committee, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that Conservative members of the Committee welcome next week's timetable motion? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) spoke for two hours on Tuesday morning and was interrupted by the Chairman 10 times to be brought back to order, that the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) was brought back to order nine times in five minutes by the Chairman for tedious interruptions and that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby admitted that the Opposition were merely trying to delay the Bill? The timetable motion is long overdue.

Mr. Wakeham: I excuse the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) because he must have found it a novel experience, when speaking in Committee, to have a large audience, rather than appearing on Sky Television.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the right hon. Gentleman again turn his mind to the question of a debate on the Government's 10-year record? Will he take into account the fact that I have just taken to Downing street a delegation of people from all over the country—not just from the poor cities of the north—and that one member of that delegation carried with her a loaf of day-old bread? She bought it from a shop in Manchester which was selling it cheaply because people in that area cannot afford to buy fresh bread. Should Parliament not take such cases on board after 10 years of Thatcherism?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman knows, he can quote a particular case and I cannot look into the details of it at the Dispatch Box. He also knows that the standard of living of all sections of the community has risen substantially under this Government.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my hon. Friend take on board the advice of the right hon. Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Foot) that all is fair in love, war and parliamentary procedure? Will my right hon. Friend have mercy on Conservative members of the Committee considering the Dock Work Bill and not be diverted from his intention to guillotine the Bill which will abolish a monstrous system?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the time has come to deal with the Bill in an orderly fashion and that that would be to the benefit of the House. I do not think that, secretly, the Opposition disagree with me quite as much as they say.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House tear himself away from the Conservative party's celebrations of 10 years of Thatcherism and consider the problems of the victims of Thatcherism and the organisations that are trying to help them, such as the citizens advice bureaux? Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 710 about the citizens advice bureaux' golden jubilee?

[That this House notes that it is 50 years since the foundation of the Citizens Advice Bureau Service throughout the United Kingdom; and takes the opportunity of its Golden Jubilee to congratulate and thank all workers past and present, voluntary and paid, Management Committee members and professional supporters who have given help throughout the years, to ensure that citizens have access to independent, free, impartial information and advice on a confidential basis, in order that they will not suffer through ignorance of their rights and responsibilities.]

Does he know that the citizens advice bureau in Bradford celebrates its golden jubilee in September but that it is now on the brink of collapse because of cuts in its funding and uncertainty about future funding? Does the Leader of the House realise that its staff are working in intolerable conditions and that clients have to wait an average of two hours to be seen? As more and more Government Departments are urging the victims of Thatcherism to consult the citizens advice bureaux, it seems high time that the Government provided some funds to enable the CABs to carry out the help that the Government are making their victims seek from such organisations?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not look upon the hon. Gentleman as the most objective observer of the scene, but the Government congratulate the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux on its 50 years' service in providing information and advice to the public. I am sure that the whole House will wish to associate itself with that early-day motion.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the question that was asked earlier about access to this House, and may we have an early debate on that and related aspects? My right hon. Friend will be aware that in the 10 years of this Government, conditions and other aspects relating to hon. Members' activities have improved dramatically and out of all recognition. However, one problem still remains. Many of us are required to use the tube from Heathrow to Westminster and during the summer months we sometimes have to stand most of the way, often with heavy luggage—*[Interruption.]* I know that some colleagues may not give a favourable response to this, but my right hon. Friend will recollect that when I first became a Member of the House I had to wear a spinal jacket. Indeed, I still have problems with my spine as a result of my flying accident, and because of that I and other hon. Members in similar positions find such journeys difficult. Will some consideration be given to that aspect of our problems?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly recognise the concern expressed by my hon. Friend. However, I do not see an early opportunity for a debate on the subject that he has raised, important though it is. I should have thought that my hon. Friend could find an opportunity of raising that matter, perhaps on the Adjournment of the House, which would seem more appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does it not smack of the "Iron Handbag" to have a sittings motion moved on the first day of Committee on the Dock Work Bill, which will also now have a guillotine motion moved on Monday, after only a few hours' debate? As the Government clearly do not want any amendments to be made to that Bill, thus leaving the Opposition to make all the running and allowing Conservative Members to sit in the Committee doing their constituency work and taking no part in the Committee proceedings, would it not have been more honest to consider that Bill on the Floor of the House? Are not the Government making a mockery of the Committee stages of Bills by allowing that to happen upstairs on the Committee Corridor? As we are talking about procedure, when are we to have a debate on private Bill procedure, a report on which we debated a few weeks ago?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate on the second subject in the near future. We had a good and interesting debate, with divided views from hon. Members of all parties and a pause to consider those views is the right thing.

I do not know how the hon. Gentleman conducted himself when he was in the late-lamented, or the not-lamented Greater London council——

Mr. Banks: Democratically.

Mr. Wakeham: —or whether he was a Member of the House under a Labour Government, but it does not seem a particularly strange idea that the Government should bring forward a Bill and be keen on having it enacted without too much amendment. That seems a perfectly normal sort of proceeding for a Government. It is the Opposition's job to propose amendments to Bills. That is perfectly reasonable, and I do not see what the hon. Gentleman is complaining about. The question is whether we are allowing enough time for the process to be dealt with decently and reasonably, and we think that we are.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Notwithstanding my right hon. Friend's reply earlier concerning the prospect of a London tube strike commencing Monday, will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Transport to make an early statement to the House about how he intends to tackle the increased congestion that such a prolonged Underground strike might cause? Some proposals could include the lifting of parking restrictions on motorists, ensuring that busways are kept open, and seeing that there is extra space for commuting road coaches to be parked off street. If this is a prolonged stoppage, such measures will probably be found necessary.

Mr. Wakeham: If there is a need for a statement, my right hon. Friend will come to the House and make one. However, as I said in my earlier reply, the negotiations are between the management and the union. It is not for my right hon. Friend to make statements about those matters. The matters raised by my hon. Friend are important, and appropriate statements will be made if that is the best way of proceeding.

Mr. Tam Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises out of a question.

Mr. Speaker: No, we will have the statement first.

Risley Remand Centre

4.6 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the incident at Her Majesty's remand centre Risley.

At 6.15 pm on Sunday 30 April, as inmates in B wing were being unlocked for evening association, a prison officer was confronted by an inmate brandishing a weapon who demanded the officer's keys. The keys were not surrendered, and the staff on duty withdrew from the landing leaving 17 inmates unlocked. These inmates then put up barricades and smashed cells. This incident was contained.

On the morning of 1 May, two officers were trapped on a landing in D wing by inmates who again erected barricades and caused systematic damage. The officers were released by staff breaking through the outer wall of the building after the trapped officers had locked themselves in a cell.

Inmates than broke through on to the roof of D wing. They had control of two landings, and access to the roof space and the roof. Staff retained control of the remaining landings of the wing. Yesterday, the inmates agreed to come down, provided that they were photographed and their solicitors were informed. This was agreed, and they were returned to custody at about 7.45 pm.

I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will wish to join me in paying tribute to the bravery of prison service staff in containing this incident. There have been injuries to officers, but fortunately none of them has been very serious. I am also grateful for the immediate and highly professional help provided by the police.

Two hundred and fifteen inmates were moved from Risley to other prisons. I have set in train an urgent inquiry into the disturbances which will be conducted by Mr. Ian Dunbar, the regional director for the south-west. A police investigation is also under way. Criminal charges and prison disciplinary proceedings will depend on that investigation.

The shortcomings at Risley provide no justification for the destruction and violence which took place and which made those shortcomings worse. As I have told the House, I broadly accepted the criticisms made by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons following his inspection of Risley. We have embarked upon a refurbishment and rebuilding programme which will transform the establishment. The refurbishment programme was due to be completed by autumn this year. That was a much-needed temporary improvement. We have decided to rebuild Risley entirely and the construction of new house blocks will begin at the end of August. Plans are for it to become a modern local prison holding both sentenced and remand prisoners, and work has already begun to this end.

Risley is overcrowded, but it is not undermanned. The staff-inmate ratio has improved even allowing for the effect of the fresh staff changes. Thinking more widely, we are taking steps to reduce both the number of people remanded in custody and the time taken to deal with cases awaiting trial. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions on the long-term effect of these measures on the people on remand, but the remand element in the prison system grew more slowly in 1988 than in any of the previous five years.

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

This year, the number of remand prisoners has actually fallen. The average remand population is about 500 lower so far during 1989 than the average last year.

The damage and lost places at Risley are a setback at a time when, in other respects, there are signs of more settled times in the prisons. The total prison population has been roughly steady for several months, new places are becoming available to relieve overcrowding, and staff are being recruited in large numbers and used to better effect. There are opportunities here that we do not intend to let slip.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): No one should either defend the violence at Risley or react to it in a way which might incite similar action in other prisons and remand centres during the summer. It is in that spirit that I ask the Home Secretary some questions about Risley.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the latest report on that remand centre, which he does not intend to publish, shows his Department to have been slow in implementing Judge Tumin's proposals to improve a prison which the judge himself described as barbarous and squalid? Does the Home Secretary understand that the real problem is remand and its contribution to overcrowding? Blandly to assert, as the Home Secretary did, that Risley is overcrowded, like many of our local prisons and remand prisons, is to make a statement of staggering complacency. Overcrowding is the Government's responsibility.

In his statement today, the Home Secretary played his usual statistical tricks. Certainly the number of remand prisoners is slightly smaller than it was a few months ago, but I am sure that the Home Secretary will confirm that it is twice as high as it was in 1979. Will he confirm that, over the past 10 years, the number of remand prisoners in British gaols has risen from 5,000 to 10,000? As 40 per cent. of those men and women will either be found not guilty or awarded non-custodial sentences, their frustration is understandable, to say the least, particularly as the length of time spent on remand has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

Therefore, once again, I ask the Home Secretary whether he will take the necessary action to reduce the remand population. First, will he introduce generally in England the rule which works successfully in Scotland—that all remand prisoners are brought to trial within 110 days? To talk of pilot schemes, as I am sure the Home Secretary will, is to misunderstand the urgency of the problem.

Secondly, will he use his influence to ensure that the courts are more consistent in granting bail? It is not a matter for the courts alone: as the Home Secretary knows, the Government can play a decisive part in the matter. Will he further increase the number of bail hostels which are available for remand prisoners?

Thirdly, does the Home Secretary not yet understand that what happened at Risley earlier this week is the direct result of the Government's penal policy—sending too many people to prison, keeping them there for too long, and failing to take the——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Whose job is that?

Mr. Hattersley: It is the job of people who legislate for long prison sentences and who will not give appropriate advice on appropriate prison sentences.

Does the Home Secretary realise that the Government are responsible, by failing to take the steps which could have resulted in the number of remand prisoners being reduced from its present intolerable level?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's first point, which is quite correct. I have read press reports, as has the right hon. Gentleman, of a later report by an inspector to the chief inspector, but I have not seen such a report. If the right hon. Gentleman forwards it to me with his comments, of course it will be considered. For the reasons which I have given, I believe that we have acted promptly on the criticisms of Risley in the chief inspector's report, both as regards the immediate refurbishment which I have described and the long-term transformation of the prison into a local prison.

The right hon. Gentleman concentrated on the remand population. He is perfectly right—there is no news in that. Over recent years, the population has grown both absolutely and as a proportion of the total. What is news and what I have imparted to the House, although the right hon. Gentleman has some difficulty in accepting it, is that, recently, in the total prison population as with the remand population, there has been a small improvement. The right hon. Gentleman is concealing his obvious satisfaction with that. He should be glad that the trend which he has advocated for a long time is just faintly beginning to appear. I would not put it higher than that.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to the details. Time limits are important. It is not a pilot scheme that we are introducing. What we are doing, in accordance with the permission given us by Parliament, is introducing time limits throughout England and Wales. On 1 April last year, they were extended to Wales and nine English counties, which included the Greater Manchester and Chester circuit, of relevance to Risley. On 1 June this year, they will be extended to most of the rest of England, including Merseyside, Cumbria, Lancashire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. The principle of time limits is not a matter of pilots; it is being applied. As time limits begin to work, they reduce delays. As they reduce delays, it will be possible to tighten them further. That is advice that I took a long time ago.

Equally, with hostels, there will be people whom magistrates might be willing to send to a bail hostel but to whom they would not be willing to give perfect freedom while they are awaiting trial. We are building up the bail hostel programme. There will be 500 extra places in bail hostels by 5 April 1991. The right hon. Gentleman did not mention bail information schemes, but the spread of such schemes from court to court makes it more likely that magistrates will have information about individual offenders which may lead them to feel that they can grant bail. He did not mention electronic monitoring. We are beginning trials in Nottingham, north Tyneside and Tower Bridge this summer to see if that technique can make a contribution to bringing down remand.

I hope that the right hon. Gentleman does not wish to convey the impression—I do not think he does—that magistrates are wrong in many cases in denying bail. There are two occasions when bail comes up in the House. The first is after an incident like this, when everyone says that too many people are remanded in custody. The other is

when someone on bail commits a fearful offence. Then I am told from all sides of the House that the Bail Act 1976 is far too lax. The Bail Act is about right. There is a presumption for bail. In certain circumstances magistrates are entitled to deny it. I do not think that anyone who has watched the events of the last four days at Risley could reasonably deny that, for the protection of citizens, it is inevitable that quite large numbers of people awaiting trial will be, and should be, remanded in custody.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a general welcome on the Government side of the House for his statement and in particular for the remarks that he has just made about the proposals to reduce the remand population and improve the prison service as a whole? Does he accept that there is a recognition of the important part played by prison staff at Risley under the leadership of the governor at this difficult time? They did very well in controlling the situation. Will he confirm that the staff ratio at Risley is perhaps the highest that it has ever been in many years, at 1·5? Does he accept that it is most welcome that that rather unhappy institution is to be rebuilt? When it is rebuilt, will he ensure that the locking mechanism is electronic, so as to avoid the seizure of keys which led to the beginning of the incident? Will he accept that his contribution to improving the prison system by a huge 46 per cent. increase in expenditure this year is the highest ever?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The point about the locking system is relevant and is one that Mr. Dunbar will want to cover. My hon. Friend is right about the staffing level. Obviously the fresh start changes and the abolition of a lot of overtime affect it, but even since fresh start, whereas the number of prisoners went down between 1988 and 1989 from 690 to 580, the number of staff went down by only 10. That is why the ratio of staff to inmates has improved.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that it is with sadness and sorrow that I rise on this occasion? I want to joint in the tributes to the prison officers who showed bravery in difficult circumstances.

Will the inquiry's findings be made public? How will the inquiry affect the plans to change Risley into a local prison, which should come to fruition at the end of June or the beginning of July? Will the right hon. Gentleman see whether Risley could be rebuilt in less than eight years? Will he accept that a warning was put in the log on the Friday that disturbances were likely on the Sunday? Am I correct that there were only 25 discipline officers on duty on Sunday evening? If the right hon. Gentleman's reply is that many of the prisoners were locked away, is it not a fact that the locking away of prisoners like animals brings about such an incident?

Does he not agree that the remand system cannot be all that perfect when 5 per cent. are found to be innocent and 35 per cent. do not receive a custodial sentence? Is there not something gravely wrong with the system?

Mr. Hurd: As the Member of Parliament for the constituency, the hon. Gentleman has taken a close and constructive interest in Risley during the time that I have been responsible for it. I have asked Mr. Dunbar to prepare and present his report in the usual way, which is as a report to me. I doubt, therefore, whether it should be published. I will ensure, however, that the hon. Gentleman in particular, but the House in general, receive a summary and the conclusions.

There will be no change or delay in the conversion of Risley into a local prison. The hon. Gentleman knows from his knowledge of the subject that that will take time, but there will be no going back on that.

I have nothing to substantiate the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the log, although I, too, have heard such reports. The log and the number of discipline staff available at the relevant time are obviously matters for the inquiry. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will agree—as I have heard the representative of the Prison Oficers Association say—that, even if there had been a substantial number of extra staff, that probably would not have averted what happened.

No one would claim that the remand system is perfect or that mistakes are not made in bail decisions. I have stated our measures to reduce to the minimum the numbers remanded in custody. However, I believe that it is clear that, even if all those measures were entirely effective, it is right and inevitable that, for the protection of the citizen, a large number of people—perhaps those accused of violent offences—are remanded in custody by the magistrates. We must find places for them.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the number of people in the last recorded year who committed offences while on bail? Is it not a fact that if a person is refused bail, he has the opportunity to reverse that, perhaps wrong, decision by appealing to a judge in a Crown court? However, if the public interest is not adequately safeguarded by magistrates who grant bail too easily, there is no appeal. Will my right hon. Friend not listen to the suggestions of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and, above all, avoid administrative interference in the discretion of the magistrates in deciding whether to grant or withhold bail?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot give the figure for which my hon. Friend has asked. However, he is right to say that it is precisely the number of such incidents that causes a great deal of public controversy and pressure on the Bail Act. The Bail Act makes it clear that the responsibility is with the courts, and that must remain so. The Bail Act is as clearly tilted towards a presumption of bail as is satisfactory and safe. There is room for greater concordance in magistrates' decisions on the granting of bail, but that is a matter for the magistrates. I want to create other options among which magistrates can choose, so that they are not left with just a choice between leaving *X* completely free while he awaits trial, or locking him up in such a place as Risley. The whole point of electronic monitoring and of bail hostels is to give magistrates a rather wider discretion than, in practice, they sometimes have now.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I gladly join in the tribute paid to the officers and the police in their handling of this episode, but I express great concern that the Home Sectetary has betrayed again his gross complacency about those held on remand in this country. I draw his attention to the fact that, in each year that he has been Home Secretary, more than a score of young people have committed suicide on remand and that last year, on average, 11,439 prisoners were held on

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

remand, which was an increase on the previous years. What is it that makes him so complacent and so shameless in seeking to defend the small steps taken as adequate to deal with a national scandal? Why does he do so little—by his own admission, a mere 500 additional places in bail hostels by 1991—to solve this appalling situation?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is being silly, which is not characteristic. I am not the least complacent, either about the prison system in general or about the remand population in particular. What I have listed is a series of measures—I believe unmatched in the past—for improving a deeply unsatisfactory situation.

I must remind the House that, although it is perfectly right for the reasons I have given—I believe that most of the House accept them—that we should take measures to reduce the remand population where possible, the other side of the equation, which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) persistently ignores in all our debates, is that the citizen requires protection. If we were to change the law and lean on the magistrates so that a larger number of people who may be accused of violent offences were given bail——

Mr. Hattersley: Most of them are not violent.

Mr. Hurd: Hon. Members will have seen what happened on the roof of Risley and what preceded it. Without prejudging any particular cases, what people have seen on their television screens during the past few days has reinforced the notion held by most of them that—I state again—it is inevitable and right that quite a substantial number of people awaiting trial will need to be remanded in custody. It is realistic to say that, not complacent. We must provide adequate, decent, austere places for that purpose.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend has handled the situation at Risley extremely well and I am sure that most of my hon. Friends would support him, the police and the prison authorities in the action that they have taken.

There are lessons that we can learn from this particular incident. Before 1995, my right hon. Friend plans to provide a further 25,000 prison places. Does he consider that there is a strong argument for dividing the prison system from the remand system and that we should look carefully at the system operated in many American cities, where remand centres are close to court centres? At those centres, alienation is reduced by improving the standards of family and legal visits and by improving the standard of care. We should accept at the same time, however, that there are people who are a danger to the community and who are likely to offend or intimidate witnesses, and that such people need to be kept in custody.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that we need to be open to new ideas within the framework that he has suggested—that we should consider the design, construction and management of remand centres. I made a statement on that a few weeks ago. Because our situation is serious, I believe that we should be ready to learn and listen, as the Select Committee on Home Affairs recommended to us.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Home Secretary aware that, during the disorders at Risley, inmates were taken from there to Strangeways prison in Manchester? What further strain did that impose on the staff and prisoners alike at a gaol that is already dangerously overcrowded? What can he say today to allay the fears of those in Manchester who feel that, unless further action is taken soon, we shall have still further ugly scenes at the Manchester prison?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is right, and it applied not only to Strangeways but also to Armley prison in Leeds, both of which are operating in great difficulty in terms of overcrowding. An absolutely necessary result of the action that was taken by some of the inmates at Risley was that others had to be moved quickly to where there was just space to accommodate them. We have had to use a few police cells but, for reasons with which the right hon. Gentleman will agree, that is a highly unsatisfactory practice, and we kept it to a minimum.

Undoubtedly, the action taken by the inmates has put a strain on other, already crowded prisons, such as Strangeways, as the right hon. Gentleman says, and there can be no denying that. We must now pick up the pieces and restore the accommodation at Risley, and at the other places which are now becoming available thanks to the programme which we have set in hand and which the Opposition have consistently denounced.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does the Home Secretary appreciate that, while most people are aware of the huge effort that he has made to get more resources for the prison building and reconstruction programme, many people felt heartily sick to see the prison governor on television stating publicly that he had agreed to the full demands by the prisoners' so-called shop stewards, which included their being photographed by a particular newspaper as they disengaged from their costly vandalism? How much damage was caused? Does my right hon. Friend accept the principle that those who committed acts of vandalism should be strongly disciplined?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot assess the total damage, but it was clearly substantial. I said in my statement that a police investigation was in hand and that criminal proceedings, and possible prison disciplinary measures, would obviously need to be considered as a result of that investigation.

My hon. Friend is wrong about the so-called negotiations. There was no negotiation on matters of substance. It was simply a matter of timing and who should be present when they came down. He is also astray on the question of photographs. We are not allowed by law to take individual photographs of unconvicted prisoners. It may prove satisfactory that, at the request of the inmates, we have been able to do so.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the situation in Liverpool prison is now rather bubbling because of what happend at Risley and that 60 remand prisoners have been transferred there? It is true that 30 detached staff have been put into Liverpool prison, which is already overcrowded and understaffed. Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that the first reaction of some of the prison inmates in

Liverpool was, on exercise, to stage a sit-down? Clearly, immediate action must be taken by the Government to get rid of unnecessary remand prisoners.

I do not know all the answers. I wish I did. There must be some immediate action; otherwise the situation in Liverpool could get very difficult indeed. We are already aware of the terrible overcrowding and conditions in that prison. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to look into the matter seriously and to act quickly to avoid difficulties that otherwise are likely to arise.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman puts the point fairly. When inmates create that type of damage and put out of action that amount of space at Risley, there is bound to be a strain elsewhere, and the right hon. Gentleman described the strain at Liverpool. The remarks of his right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook were wise in that respect, and I hope that no one, whether hon. Members or leaders of the POA, will give any encouragement to the copycat notion, which is always a danger in prisons when events such as this occur.

I have listed the measure that we are taking to provide possibilities for the courts other than remand in custody, but I do not believe it would be right for us to ask the House to change the Bail Act or for the Government to give instructions to the magistrates to go against what, in their judgment, case by case, they believe to be necessary for the protection of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents and others.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is an answer to the problem? It is to introduce private sector involvement into the running of remand centres and the taking of prisoners to and from court—the type of measures that my right hon. Friend announced four or five weeks ago. Can he announce the timetable for those steps? Will he take it from me that many of his hon. Friends deeply resent the attacks made on him by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)? My right hon. Friend has done more to ease this problem through the introduction of time limits than any Home Secretary for 40 or 50 years.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is being unfair. The hon. Member for Sparkbrook was in one of his statesmanlike modes this afternoon and I do not need protecting from him on this occasion. As my hon. Friend said, I told the House some weeks ago that, following the Select Committee's report, the possibilities of private management of remand and of escort duties are well worth pursuing. I told the House of the steps that we were taking to pursue those possibilities. It will require a change in the law if they are to be effected.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I ask the Secretary of State not to set his face against any further change in the clarity of advice to the courts or the training of magistrates. It is worrying that 40 per cent. of those on remand are either found not guilty or do not receive custodial sentence. I hope that, when the Minister of State addresses the Centre for Policy Studies on sentencing in a few weeks time, he will bring with him some ideas, or, at least, will not be as immoveable on this matter as the Secretary of State has been today.

Mr. Hurd: There is nothing immoveable about our position. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the figure he quoted is worrying. Why has this situation arisen? Certainly, in some cases, magistrates feel that they do not know enough about the young man in front of them and therefore play safe and sentence him to remand in custody, as would the hon. Gentleman.

If sufficient information were immediately available to magistrates about the defendant's family background and job, which the bail information scheme gives, it would be more likely that magistrates would decide to give bail.

In addition, magistrates may feel that they are not happy for the defendant to be entirely free during that time. If it were shown that electric monitoring and the curfew principle worked, or if they knew that there was a well-run bail hostel in the neighbourhood, they could take either of those two options, rather than send a man on remand to somewhere such as Risley. We are not immoveable about considering such practices and possibilities, but are actively developing them. I hope that they are beginning to produce results.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am sure that, having seen on television the events that occurred at Risley the public will be glad of the prompt action of the police and prison officers. I am sure that they were equally glad that the magistrates recommended that those people should be remanded in custody. I am sure that they will welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that the protection of the public must be paramount in deciding whether prisoners are kept on remand in custody. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in tackling prison overcrowding with the range of measures that he has outlined, it is also important to take more action to classify remand prisoners? Not all the prisoners in Risley caused the damage.

One of the proposals in the Green Paper that was outlined some months ago recommended that more would be done about the classification problem. That is important if there are to be more bail hostels. One fifth of those in bail hostels abscond, which is not entirely satisfactory. I hope that my right hon. Friend will pursue this matter with the urgency with which he is pursuing the other measures.

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. On Friday I visited B wing at Hull prison, which has some of the same problems as Risley. One wing suffers from the same disadvantages of design. A large number of remand prisoners tend to bully others, while a minority are bullied. That is true of most remand centres, so categorisation is crucially important.

In my moment of irritation, I failed to pick up an important point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), on which my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) almost touched: the problem of suicides. When a suicide occurs it is always a disaster and a tragedy, and even more so in prison than outside. That is why we have worked out, and are applying, the lessons which have, I hope, been learned. We must try to categorise and spot dangers as best we can, then try to communicate effectively with those whom we believe to be in danger. That is an important point.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Secretary of State will be aware that I recently made representations to his Department about constituents who have been in Armley. Given the seriousness of recent events and conditions

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

there I am staggered by the complacency that he and his Department have shown this afternoon. We shall never know whether the young people on remand in Armley who killed themselves were innocent or whether they were a danger to the public, because, sadly, they are now dead.

How many of the 215 prisoners who have been moved from Risley will go to Armley? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that his Department was warned that closing Thorpe Arch to young remand prisoners could lead to the recent tragedies in Armley? If others are to go to Armley and conditions there get worse, what special measures does he intend to take to alleviate those problems. How many more staff will he provide and what special measures will he take to try to prevent any more tragedies there?

Mr. Hurd: I have already volunteered, in answer to an earlier question about Strangeways, the information that some of the inmates of Risley were transferred to Armley. Whether detached staff follow them, as they have elsewhere, or how long they will have to stay, I do not know, but I shall let the hon. Lady know.

I hope that the hon. Lady will not be entirely captured by the argument that suicides and attempted suicides are the result of conditions, whether in Armley, Risley or anywhere else. I do not believe that that is so. The correlation is not clear. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) is nodding in agreement. That is clear if one looks at the individual cases. They have to be looked at carefully. Often it is the prospect of trial, the existence of charges, their shadow and, perhaps, the collapse of personal life that results which produces the outcome.

There has also been the story which got around in Armley, to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State drew attention—that a prisoner was more likely to be given bail if he did himself some injury. I am not denying that in some cases what the hon. Lady says may be true, but I ask her not to over-simplify. There are many reasons which may result in such a tragic decision, and we have to ferret them all out as best we can in advance. That will not always be possible, but that is what we must try to do.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the Conservative party returned to power the then Home Secretary, my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw, announced one of the biggest prison building programmes that hon. Members have ever experienced, a momentum which future Administrations carried on? Does he also agree that, if the police make strong objections and it is right for a prisoner not to be granted bail, that must be in the public interest because there were strong reasons to suggest either that the prisoner might abscond or that he might abscond and commit further serious offences? Therefore, bail is given in the public interest according to the circumstances.

Does my right hon. Friend also agree that there are no votes in building prisons? He knows how angry I am about the remand prison proposed for Milnrow in Rochdale in my constituency, and how cross I have been that Rochdale council was too co-operative in those early days in talks with the Home Office. However, if it is in the public interest for prisoners not to receive bail, that has to be done. We cannot start changing the rules of the courts because of bricks and mortar, but we are doing more than any other Government, and the prisoners should understand that.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with all my hon. Friend's points. My noble Friend Lord Whitelaw, I think last week, opened the new prison at Garth. The latest example of the prison building programme. It has taken far too long to build prisons, partly because of planning difficulties. I shall look carefully to see what sites are available in my hon. Friend's constituency now that I know that I have his co-operation.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the Home Secretary aware that, whenever we get prison disturbances, as we do quite regularly, he comes along and makes the identical statement that he has made today, to the effect that everything possible is being done? Why, then, is there such unrest within the prison service? He must know, his advisers must tell him, that, as any hon. Member with a prison within his or her constituency who has contact with that prison and the people who run it will say, there is always an underlying situation that could ignite at any time. Last week it ignited in Risley.

Until the Home Secretary realises that it is the numbers that are the root problem within our prison system, until we get the numbers down, until we get meaningful work in the prisons, until we get men and women out of their cells, where they are often locked up for hour after hour, we shall continue to have explosions within our prison service. When the Home Secretary faces the fact that the important thing is not building prisons but getting the numbers down there is a real possibility that we shall start to tackle the whole issue of the prison service in this country.

Mr. Hurd: Both I and my hon. Friend visit prisons regularly. When I do so, I always ask that I have a period alone with members of the POA and the board of visitors. So I think that I get as clear a notion as anybody of the underlying tensions and dangers which of course exist. The hon. Member is perfectly right to say that they are due, not wholly—because running a prison in a society with as many violent people in it as we and the rest of western Europe have is a dangerous business—but partly to overcrowding. That is partly the result of neglect in the past.

If I had taken the advice of the Opposition and stopped the prison building and refurbishment programme the position at Risley, instead of being serious, would have been a total disaster. It is precisely because we have a little hope, thanks to the modernisation programme, that we are able to make progress. But certainly we have to work towards the elimination of overcrowding. That is why I am glad, as I said at the end of my statement, that for the last few months the total population of the prisons has been roughly steady. Meanwhile, thanks to our programme, new places are becoming available, with the hope, despite the setback at Risley, that the position which the hon. Member describes will slowly improve.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Will the Home Secretary accept that, while I agree with him that the level of violence cannot be justified by the disgusting conditions at Risley, it is quite disgusting that he is so clearly complacent about those conditions and the fact that they inevitably had an impact on the behaviour of those in Risley over the last four days? He quite fairly congratulates the POA on the role it has played this week, but that would come a bit

better from him if he listened to those voices within the POA telling him that they do not feel that they have the resources or the training to deal with those who are mentally ill, are drug addicts or have any of the other behavioural problems found within an institution such as Risley. That is a significant part of the problem that has arisen there.

The right hon. Gentleman has been questioned and criticised by my hon. Friends about the conditions of remand prisoners in the north-west, and beyond the north-west, as a result of Risley. Can he tell the House, as he ought to, what steps he will take to alleviate the build-up of tensions at Walton, Strangeways, Armley and all those prisons in which pressure will have increased because of the events at Risley?

Mr. Hurd: We shall do this by detaching staff to meet the new responsibilities and limiting those responsibilities in time as much as we can. But that will depend on the assessment of how quickly we can bring the cells at Risley back into operation and what space elsewhere may be available. That is a major prison management task in the north, thanks to the action taken by the inmates at Risley, —*[Interruption.]*—by some inmates at Risley who have done a great deal of damage.

On the question of staffing, this is, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, a matter which the POA constantly and naturally presses. Since 1979, the total of staff has risen by 45 per cent. while the number of inmates has risen by 16 per cent. In the last year, we have recruited 1,600 prison officers, of which 900 represent net growth, after allowing for retirement and wastage. Obviously, these are needed to man the new prisons. Although, as the hon. Gentleman says, this point is constantly argued, I do not believe that the record on staffing is bad. Staff time and talent is much better used than it was when the system depended on a great deal of inefficient overtime.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary says that he is a supporter of the 110-day trial rule, and claims to be its instigator. The right hon. Gentleman says that it has passed through its pilot stage and that he is happy that it is operating successfully in Manchester. Why does he not refute allegations of complacency by applying the 110-day rule all over Britain, and so automatically and inevitably reducing the remand population?

Mr Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is wrong to talk about the 110-day rule. In England and Wales, the time limits are flexible; that is, they vary from place to place. I gave the timetable in which I am introducing those limits. Before one can introduce them sensibly, there must be discussions with the Crown prosecution service and with other people concerned, to ensure that they are fixed reasonably. I have experienced some difficulty with the right hon. Gentleman's own city. If he makes inquiries, he will discover why Birmingham said that it was difficult for it to accept the same kind of restrictions that I imposed on the rest of the west midlands.

That work must be done realistically, but it is being done. This afternoon, I announced the next stage, beginning on 1 June. When the whole of England and Wales is covered, we can begin, in the light of experience, to tighten and reduce the time available. That will have some effect on the remand population.

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to your earlier ruling about not allowing supplementary questions to open ministerial questions. Speaking for myself, I am concerned about that ruling, because it affects the ability of Opposition Members to catch Ministers on the hop. Were it not to apply, Opposition Members would have an opportunity to be somewhat more immediate in terms of the subjects that they raise in supplementary questions. As I believe that problems arise out of the use of syndicates of right hon. and hon. Members, would it not be better to act against such syndicates rather than move against open questions to Ministers, which give Opposition Members in particular an opportunity to put Ministers on the spot? Will you, Mr. Speaker, examine the question of syndicates? Perhaps the matter might be referred to the Procedure Committee for examination in greater detail.

Mr. Speaker: I enunciated nothing new today, for that has always been the rule. I merely drew attention to that ruling because there were five questions on the Order Paper early in the day that were clearly open questions. As the hon. Gentleman's second point, I am aware of the problem of syndicates. When right hon. and hon. Members are not present, very often it is because they have forgotten or that a syndicate has put in a question for them. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's referring that matter to the Procedure Committee, because that practice is not beneficial to our procedures.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Plant Health (Great Britain) (Amendment) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 553) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Legal aid (Functions) (No. 2) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Orders of the Day

Police Officers (Central Service) Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

4.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend section 43 of the Police Act 1964 and section 38 of the Police (Scotland) Act (1967) so as to overcome difficulties that have arisen over the status of police officers seconded from their own forces to central service—that is, temporary service under the Crown.

Most of those officers are engaged in training duties at the police staff colleges and district police training centres, but they also include the staff officers to the inspectors of constabulary, members of the police research services unit, and officers engaged in various liaison duties. Their numbers are relatively small. There are only some 600 police officers on central service in England and Wales and in Scotland out of a total police strength of 138,000. However, the services that they help to provide are vital to the efficiency of the police services.

The problem, briefly, is this. Section 43 of the Police Act 1964 provides that an officer on central service is to be treated as though he were not a member of a police force for the duration of his secondment. The position is the same in Scotland. The effect is that a police officer on central service has no police powers, no right to wear a uniform, no protection under section 51 of the Police Act 1964, which makes it an offence to assault a constable in the execution of his duty, and no right to membership of a police staff association.

There are occasions when seconded police officers need to wear police uniforms in public. Staff officers to the inspectors of constabulary need to do so when accompanying the inspectors on their visits of inspection. Officers at district training centres need to do so when they are in charge of parties of probationer constables outside the premises.

An officer in police uniform would be expected by members of the public to exercise police powers if the circumstances demanded it. A central service officer would therefore find himself in a very difficult position if prompt action were needed that called for the use of police powers. He would be faced with the choice of ignoring his lack of police powers and taking the necessary action or deciding not to become involved. In such circumstances a constable, or most constables, would act instinctively as a police officer and take the necessary action—and I believe that they would be right to do so.

We now face a problem, because, before 1964, there was no statutory provision for common police services. Such services were provided on an ad hoc basis, with the officers who were seconded to perform them remaining members of their parent forces. That was not a very satisfactory arrangement. Although the seconded officers were performing duties for which the Secretary of State was ultimately responsible, they were not answerable to him. They were answerable to the chief officers of their parent forces. That produced a blurring of the lines of management responsibility and a potential conflict of loyalties.

In 1964 the opportunity was taken to put central service arrangements on a more rational basis. As central services officers are performing duties for which the Secretary of State is ultimately responsible, it is felt—quite rightly—that they should be answerable to him. That, essentially, is what section 43 of the Police Act 1964 provides.

It might be argued that, as the police service has been able to live with these problems for 25 years, there can be no great need for action to be taken to address them now. I do not think that that is the correct view. If there is a need for central service officers to wear police uniform in public when performing their central service duties, they should have the right to do so. If that means that they may occasionally need to exercise police powers when the circumstances demand, they should retain those powers.

Like any other police officer, central service officers should be given protection against assault and they should have the right to belong to the appropriate police staff association.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Before my right hon. Friend leaves that point, can he say whether the Bill will apply to the small number of Police Act forces in ports, such as the Port of London police, who I understand were covered by the 1964 Act?

Mr. Hogg: I concede that I do not know the answer to that question. I shall take guidance, and, if I am permitted to wind up, I shall give my hon. Friend a reply.

I turn to the provisions of the Bill. Subsection (1) of clause 1 provides for the insertion of three new subsections after section 43(3) of the Police Act 1964.

The new subsection (3A) gives police officers the right to wear uniform, the right to exercise police powers, if the need arises, and the right to remain members of the Police Federation. It also gives them the protection against assaults which is provided by section 51 of the 1964 Act.

The new subsection (3B) makes the Secretary of State liable for any torts committed by central service officers in the exercise of their police powers. This liability is likely to arise very rarely, if at all, but a remedy for torts and a liability in tort must be provided.

As central service officers are answerable in law to the Secretary of State for the performance of their central service duties, it seems right that he should be liable for any torts committed by such officers in the exercise of their police powers.

The new subsection (3C) makes it clear that police officers who are seconded as advisers are to be regarded as being on central service. Subsection (2) of clause 1, provides for the Bill to have retrospective effect. This provision protects the position of central service officers who may in the past have acted—either from ignorance of the legal position or in what they regarded as the public interest—as though they possessed the powers and privileges of police officers. We have no records of any such cases, but there could be some. The position needs to be covered.

Clause 2 deals with Scotland, where the present position is broadly the same as that in England and Wales. It is clearly desirable that the legislation relating to police

officers on central service should remain consistent on both sides of the border. Clause 2 implements that objective.

This is a small Bill, but it is desirable and not, I believe, controversial. I commend it to the House.

5.1 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): This is one of the few occasions when the Opposition find very little to argue over. This is a non-controversial Bill. I do not intend unnecessarily to delay the proceedings by doing what comes naturally to most hon. Members—trying to spin out a long speech when a short one would do.

The Opposition support the Bill. Most of us thought that the provisions were already incorporated in the existing legislation, and it comes as a surprise to learn that they are not. Most of the provisions are completely sensible. It is absolutely right that central service members should be able to wear uniform, have police powers and be members of the Police Federation or the appropriate staff association. It is also right that the police should be provided with protection against assault.

Two small points have been drawn to my attention. The first concerns the nature of the disciplining of officers who are seconded to the central service. I hope that when he replies to the debate the Minister will answer that point in a constructive spirit. The Police Complaints Authority said recently that it is concerned about the fact that a large number of complaints against the police run into the ground because police officers take early retirement on grounds of ill health. I draw that parallel only because I understand that if someone is seconded to central service, disciplinary action cannot be taken if a complaint is upheld against him. Disciplinary action might be evaded if someone is transferred to central service. The legislation ought to cover such a possibility.

Secondly, when a person is seconded to central service it is not entirely clear to us whether the provisions covering personal financial arrangements and outside business interests, which are incompatible with status as a police officer, will also apply to those who are seconded to central service. Does the Bill provide that the code of conduct that applies to police officers will also apply to someone who is seconded to central service? Those are the only two points that worry the Opposition.

5.5 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I wish first to declare an outside interest. I am the parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation.

The Police Federation warmly welcomes the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister has explained to the House that it enables police officers on central service to be treated as members of police forces for the jurisdiction of constables. It also makes them eligible for membership of the Police Federation and provides them with protection against assaults and the right to wear a uniform. Those are two important rights for any officer who is on central service.

The Bill makes it clear that central service is temporary service under the Crown as it relates to those services that the Home Secretary provides to promote the efficiency of the police. It is therefore a short but nevertheless important Bill. I agree entirely with the Minister that the Bill needed to be introduced, and it ought to be passed by Parliament. The fact that this unsatisfactory state of affairs has continued for some years is no reason for allowing it to continue.

While it may seem astonishing to the man in the street that a police officer seconded from his or her force to central service may experience difficulty over status, that is indeed the case. As my hon. Friend told the House, there are some 600 police officers on central service in England, Wales and Scotland. The services in which they are engaged include the police staff colleges, the district police training centres, the forensic science laboratories and the staff officers to the inspectors of constabulary. They make an important contribution to the efficiency of the police service.

The House will perhaps be surprised to learn that a police officer on central service ceases to be a member of a police force. That came as a surprise to me, and I have no doubt that it has come as a surprise to other hon. Members. He has no powers, no right to wear a uniform, no legal protection from assault in the exercise of his duty and no right to membership of the Police Federation or other police staff associations. That unsatisfactory state of affairs has existed for a long time and needs to be remedied.

It is for that reason that clause 1(2) has retrospective effect. All hon. Members pause when they hear the word "retrospective". The purpose of the clause, however, is to safeguard those officers who have acted in the public interest as though they had had since 1964 the powers that are normally expected of them. I see this as clarification of the existing position rather than as the conferring of new powers on a retrospective basis.

Although the Police Federation warmly welcomes the Bill, there are several points which I hope my hon. Friend will be able to clarify. It appears that, as a result of specifying the provisions in the proposed new section 43(3A), a person engaged on central service shall be treated as though he were a member of his police force. It follows that, in relation to the remaining sections of the 1964 Act, a person, as a result of the existing provisions of section 43(1), shall be treated as though he were not a member of the force in question.

One of the principal purposes of the Bill is to provide that police officers on central service are treated as members of police forces for the purpose of eligibility for the Police Federation. Therefore, an important distinction must be made between the eligibility of officers on central service being members of the Police Federation and the Police Federation's rights to represent such officers for the purposes of negotiations or consultations.

Let us consider for example the police advisory boards established by the Police Act 1964. Section 46(2) of that Act provides:

"The constitution and proceedings of each of the Police Advisory Boards shall be such as the Secretary of State may determine after consulting organisations representing the interests of police authorities and of members of police forces and police cadets."

Whereas section 46(2) makes reference to the Secretary of State determining the constitution and proceedings of each police advisory board after consulting the organisations representing the police forces, will my hon. Friend say whether the Secretary of State is under an obligation to consult the Police Federation in its capacity as

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

representing those members on central service, unless those officers are to be treated as members of their police force for the purpose of section 46?

Furthermore, and perhaps more important, there are the provisions of the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980. As my hon. Friend will be aware, section 1 of that Act provides for the consideration by the board of questions relating to hours of duty, leave, pay and allowances, pensions, or the issue and return of police clothing, personal equipment and accoutrements. Similar considerations apply to the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980 as to section 46 of the Police Act 1964. Although central service officers may be members of the Police Federation, arguably the Police Federation may not represent their interests on the negotiating board without any amendment to the 1980 or 1964 Acts.

I hope that those matters will be clarified during the debate and dealt with in Committee so that officers engaged on central service shall be treated as if they were members of their police force for the purpose of the Police Act 1964 and the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980. They are clearly very important to officers engaged on central service. I do not wish to detain the House any further, except to repeat that the Police Federation warmly welcomes the Bill and hopes that it will have a speedy passage through Parliament.

5.12 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The only oddity about the Bill is that it has taken a quarter of a century to come before the House. It enjoys the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House and need not delay us long.

I should like the Minister to amplify the reasons why the Bill is retrospective. It is somewhat odd that he has chosen to make the Bill operate retrospectively when, apparently, he is not aware of the number of incidents involving central service police officers who have acted as though they possessed the powers and privileges of police officers in each year since the Police Act 1964. I wonder whether his decision to legislate was taken in response to a general representation about the desirability of that change, which is obviously understood, whether or not there are outstanding cases that may be affected by the retrospective provisions.

The Minister's written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) suggested that he did not have the information that might have thrown some light on the reasons for the retrospective provisions, but the Minister did not address the matter directly this afternoon. Perhaps he will do so in his concluding remarks when he hopes to reply to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

It seems right that there should be no doubt that police officers on central service can use police powers that they would enjoy when attached to their force and that they should have legal protection against assault. Can the Minister say whether there have been cases in which that lack of cover has presented a problem? Clearly it is a problem theoretically, but we do not usually legislate to deal with theoretical problems.

I am grateful to the Minister for clarifying the import of the Bill's provisions.

5.15 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I shall speak briefly in support of the Bill. Like other hon. Members who have spoken so far, I warmly welcome the Bill, not only because it removes an anomaly in the Police Act 1964 and the Police (Scotland) Act 1967, but because it demonstrates the willingness of the Home Office to amend the 1964 Act where change is necessary to produce a more efficient and effective police service.

The services concerned with the amendment to section 43 of the 1964 Act fulfil many valuable functions on behalf of individual police forces, and those services should be organised on a national basis. They include the police staff college at Bramshill into which my Select Committee on Home Affairs has recently inquired.

It is clearly anomalous that officers in central service posts should not hold the historic office of constable. Although there may not have been many occasions when officers on central service have been called upon to perform police duties involving the exercise of jurisdictional powers, that is more likely to happen in future years, especially now that more than 600 officers of all ranks are involved in those duties—a not inconsiderable number.

I mention that point because I feel that it is probable that the number of central service posts will increase as time goes on in response to those policing problems which clearly require a national response and a common solution. I note the growing importance being placed on the Association of Chief Police Officers achieving co-operation between the 43 police forces in England and Wales. It is for consideration whether a strengthened ACPO secretariat should become part of central services.

The Bill also removes the Police Complaints Authority from its position as a central service. That change is supported by the authority, and will doubtless help to reinforce its perceived and actual independence.

There are only two minor queries that I wish to raise. First, it does not extend to Northern Ireland. I fully appreciate the reason for that. As Northern Ireland has only one force—the Royal Ulster Constabulary—it has no need for combined central services.

Nevertheless, from my visits to the police staff college at Bramshill, I am aware that some of the staff there are from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Are officers from the RUC on the staff at Bramshill to lack the jurisdiction of constables and eligibility for membership of staff associations held by officers on the staff from England, Wales and Scotland? That point will be of particular interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who so ably represents the Police Federation of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If a central service officer were to engender a complaint of misconduct while exercising the powers of a constable vested in him by the Bill, the question would arise as to who should take responsibility for the complaints process under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Would the Secretary of State for England and Wales—the Home Secretary—or would the Secretary of State for Scotland be liable? Would the Secretary of State, who is liable in respect of torts committed by that officer under new subsection 43 (3B) of the Police Act 1964, be responsible, or would it be the chief constable of the force to which the officer was said to belong under subsection (3A)? I should be grateful for clarification from my hon. Friend on those two small matters.

My queries in no way detract from my support for this welcome measure. It is a short Bill and, as we have discovered, it is a non-controversial measure, but it represents a worthwhile improvement to previous legislation and it may pave the way for further developments in the police central services. It may thus contribute to the development of a more efficient and effective service, which we all wish to see.

5.21 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am grateful for the general support that hon. Members have given to the Bill. I will seek to respond to the specific questions raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked whether the Bill applies to ports police, of whom there are a small number of forces. Neither the Bill nor the Police Act 1964 apply to ports police. Ports police are set up under private legislation and the Minister responsible for them is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) raised a number of points, including the matter of business interests. It is true that a member of the forces may not carry out any business in addition to police duties. There is no specific parallel for officers on central service, but as far as we are aware, none of them has ever done so. Such conduct would be strongly discouraged. We have the sanction of returning such an officer to his own force where, of course the ordinary principles would immediately apply.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield also raised related questions about disciplinary procedures, including whether a police officer could evade a disciplinary charge by being transferred to central service. Although there is probably no barrier in law to such a step, there are substantial practical barriers. An officer would not be appointed to the central service in such circumstances and if such a transfer happened through inadvertence, the officer would be returned promptly to the force from which he came.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) raised several questions. Before answering, I want to say how pleased we are about his appointment as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation and I am certain that the Police Federation will benefit enormously from the advice that he is able to give it. He is correct in saying that, under the Bill, officers are not members of their own force save to the extent that is preserved in the Bill. There are specific points that need to be considered on pay, allowances and conditions. The pay and conditions of service of police officers generally are, as my hon. Friend stated correctly, negotiated in the police negotiating board. Those arrangements do not apply to police officers on central service, whose conditions of service are determined by the Home Office. To that extent, his analysis of the position is correct.

My hon. Friend's analysis of the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980 is also correct. Section 1(1)(b) of that Act provides for the staff side of the Police Negotiating Board to represent the interests of members of the police forces and police regulations apply only to members of police forces. Section 43(1) of the 1964 Act makes it clear that an officer on central service is not a member of a police force during his period of secondment, so police regulations do not apply to him and his conditions of service are not a matter for negotiation in the police negotiating board. That is the position at present. and nothing in the Bill disturbs that. If my hon. Friend tables amendments, they will be considered, but I do not want to give any undertaking about the Government's response should he decide to do so.

I must say to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) that I am grateful for his support for the Bill. He raised two related questions, one on assaults and the other on the more general question of retrospection. He was right, as I have made plain, to say that the Bill will be retrospective in its effect. The reason is that there have been cases in which officers engaged on central service have acted in the public interest as if they possessed the powers and privileges of members of a police force by, for example, wearing uniform and effecting arrests. It could be said in law that they had acted unlawfully and that, by effecting an arrest, either they had committed the tort of unlawful arrest—unless they had the powers of a citizen in the specific circumstances—or that they had conceivably committed an assault. Those are nice points of law. To cover them, and to prevent some of my colleagues from earning money that they do not deserve in litigation on such matters, the Bill is retrospective.

Central service officers may also have benefited from insurance schemes and provident funds arranged by the police staff associations. One could raise a query about the lawfulness of those benefits. That would be a misfortune, and it is another justification for the Bill being retrospective. The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of assaults on central service officers. We have no knowledge of any such assault, but clearly such an assault is possible and it is right, as a matter of principle, that we should deal with it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) raised the question of Northern Ireland. Neither the Bill nor the Police Act 1964 and the Police (Scotland) Act 1967 apply to Northern Ireland. It follows that Royal Ulster Constabulary officers who are at Bramshill as instructors will not be covered by the Bill. It may be possible to contemplate changes and we shall have to consider the scope of the Bill. If my hon. Friend wants the matter to be considered, we will consider it, but at this stage I cannot give any undertaking or commitment about the Government's response.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North also asked a specific question about what would happen if an officer serving on central service were subject to a complaint arising from the use or misuse of his police powers. The answer is that he would be forthwith returned to the force from which he had come and the ordinary complaints and disciplinary procedures of that force would then follow.

I hope that I have responded to all the questions asked of me. I am grateful to the House for the support that has been given to the Bill and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Intra-community Frontiers (Control)

5.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10412/88 relating to the abolition of controls of persons at intra-community frontiers; and endorses the Government's view that in considering the relaxation of frontier controls within the European Community the Government must keep in place necessary measures to control terrorism, drug trafficking and other crime, and immigration from non-community countries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I must announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and his hon. Friends.

Mr. Hurd: The debate gives the House an opportunity to take stock of our position on the relaxation of frontier controls in Europe.

I should like to make one point at the outset. We believe that frontier checks will continue to be a useful, indeed an indispensable, part of the protection for our citizens against the evils of terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime, and also against illegal immigration. The documents before us show divergence from the European Commission on this principle. We hold strongly to the validity of the general declaration annexed to the Single European Act, which stated:

"Nothing in the provisions of the Act shall affect the right of Member States to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of combating terrorism, crime and the traffic in drugs."

That does not mean that our stance is unreasoning or that we are smugly satisfied with present arrangements. On the contrary, I believe that we are at the start of a period of steadily intensifying co-operation within the Community in police work and in many legal matters. For many years the meetings of the Trevi group of Ministers of the Interior and Justice were relatively few and routine. Now we meet often, for example in Madrid next week, and our programme of work has become formidable.

We in the United Kingdom are among the leaders in encouraging these forward moves, because I believe that they can add to the safety of our citizens. I shall give one or two examples. The more closely we work against the drug trafficker, the better aligned our laws are on extradition, the more effectively we can provide for the confiscation of the assets of convicted criminals in each other's countries and the more clearly we understand each other's policies on immigration and asylum, the more effective we shall be in protecting our own peoples. I hope that we shall spend the next two or three years before the end of 1992 not in jousts between lawyers or in loud rhetorical wrangles over the principle of frontiers, but in solid practical work together in strengthening that protection. This is a new dimension of Home Office work and it is becoming one of the most important.

I should like to make another important preliminary point. The debate and the documents are concerned only with frontier controls as they affect the movement of people but the Single European Act goes much wider. The House will have other opportunities to discuss, for example, the proposals made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for reducing frontier formalities on the movement of goods.

The Government welcome the production of a Commission report which pulls together a number of issues related to frontiers and the free movement of Community nationals. We also welcome the recognition given in the report, which has been in evidence in our recent dealings with the Commission, that practical problems require practical solutions. This has been the keystone of the Government's approach. This was the way we tackled the Single European Act and it is the way we are now approaching negotiations with our European partners on frontiers following the Single European Act.

Daily in my mind must be the constant battle that the police and Customs services of Europe are fighting against the evils I have mentioned—terrorism, organised crime and the traffic in drugs. The Commission's report misunderstands the value of these important frontier checks. Indeed, it says:

"anyone with intimate knowledge of these matters knows that the present frontier controls are ineffective".

I do not accept that. Indeed, common sense tells us that that is not the case. The functions and effectiveness of border controls vary a good deal from country to country, depending largely on matters of geography. It is obviously more difficult to maintain a full system of control at land borders than it is at natural boundaries. We find that ourselves in Northern Ireland. But it is strange logic to say that, because land frontiers are harder to check, there should be no checks at sea and air frontiers, where checks are fairer and more effective.

The contribution that such checks make to the fight against terrorism and serious crime cannot be assessed precisely, though it is clearly significant. The deterrent effect, for example, is bound to be impossible to measure, but we know that terrorists and criminals recognise the controls as a point where they are vulnerable. The intelligence gathered from observation or questions at frontiers can prove vital in piecing together a picture of a terrorist's or criminal's movements or plans. The frontier checks we operate provide a ready opportunity to arrest and charge suspected offenders and to seize illegal goods.

However, the frontier check is not the only weapon against terrorism and serious crime. We must aim at defence in depth, by which I mean defence forward of our own frontiers—in other countries, within the borders of our partners—defence within our own frontiers—in our own towns and cities—and, where necessary and reasonable, defence at our frontiers.

Increasing co-operation with our European partners is an important part of our policy. We entirely agree with the emphasis that the Commission's report places on collaboration to prevent and combat international crime and terrorism. However, we should not believe that improving the way in which European law enforcement agencies work together can be a full substitute for border controls. This work is worth while in its own right, and we shall certainly press ahead with it.

In the Europan Community this work is carried out, as I have mentioned, within the Trevi framework. We are active, too, within individual states. In January I signed an arrangement with my opposite number in Italy to provide formally for police co-operation—particularly against terrorism, drug trafficking and serious crime. We are talking to the French about a similar agreement, which I hope to sign later this summer. Of course, all that is on top of the more informal help that our police forces give each other day by day.

We shall have to pay increasing attention to the prevention of drug misuse and to the enforcement of our laws against that in the coming months. In that respect, the value of frontier controls is again beyond doubt. Customs seized some 90 per cent. or more by weight of the heroin, cocaine and cannabis seized in the United Kingdom in 1987. It is clear that there is a significant trade in drugs within the Community. Last year about half the weight of cannabis and one third of the cocaine seized by Customs came from or through other EC countries.

Of course, we are not the only country to seize drugs at internal frontiers. It is interesting that, in 1987, French Customs made 36 per cent. by weight of their cannabis seizures at the Spanish border and 38 per cent. of their heroin seizures at the borders with their Schengen partners. So it is quite clear that strengthening the external frontier of the Community, although desirable in itself, would not by itself provide an adequate defence against drug trafficking. It would be ridiculous to argue that checks could not be made in the United Kingdom where it was easiest and most effective to do so, for example at our national frontiers. It would be ridiculous to argue that it is fine to catch a drug trafficker in Europe before he gets here; it is fine to catch him once he is in our city and towns; but the one thing we are not allowed to do is to catch him where it might be easiest to do so—at our seaports and airports.

Where there is precise intelligence, one can choose where the pounce on the drug traffickers should be made. It must be understood that a great number of these seizures are made at the frontier either cold—without precise intelligence—or as a result of profiling. That means that the seizures depend on officers being at the frontier to observe, select, question and examine. These checks should not be onerous or unreasonable, and I do not think that they are. They are not routine checks on every passenger. They are made because an officer's suspicions have been aroused by something he has seen or, sometimes, they are the product of random checks.

I believe that there is an increasing coming together of views on this point. There was some rather excited press comment a few days ago alleging that Sir Leon Brittan disagreed with the Government about the value of these border checks. In fact, what Sir Leon said was consistent with the Government's view. He said:

"The control of drug trafficking involves, amongst many other things, the ability to conduct checks wherever that may be necessary. This might be at the Community's external frontiers, at the present internal frontiers or anywhere else."

That was an important statement. His audience of British police officers acting against drug trafficking were reassured by what he said. He made it plain that nobody wants to deprive the forces of law and order of the right to check for drugs anywhere. When commenting on the changes needed at internal frontiers, he said that there would always be the possibility of a spot check here as anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Whether we agree or disagree with what Sir Leon Brittan or anyone else has said, will the Minister at some stage be saying whether these proposed directives on firearms, drugs, visas and extradition ought to be considered under the majority vote procedure or under unanimity? Could he also say clearly, so that the people of Britain will know, whether the proviso stuck on the annex of the Single European Act means that, even if unsatisfactory directives are passed, we can ignore them because of that annex to the Act?

Mr. Hurd: I would rather not give a blanket reply, since my hon. Friend mentioned a number of directives and they may fall under different articles of the Single European Act. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, who is to reply, will be able to deal with both the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Another matter that I know interests my hon. Friend is immigration. As I have said, there is a growing convergence of view on the question of frontier checks to protect citizens against particular kinds of crime. I believe that the problem of immigration is somewhat more difficult to solve. One important benefit of the Single European Act is, of course, the freedom of movement rights that it gave to citizens of the European Community. These rights reflect the high and growing common interest between all European partners. The right to freedom of movement for our own nationals to and fro in accordance with the provisions of the treaty is such a shared interest. Our partners give that right to our citizens and we give freedom of movement, for example, to the German business man or the Danish holidaymaker wishing to come to Britain.

However, nothing in the Single European Act conferred rights of free movement on non-EC citizens. That is our clear view, but others in the European Community hold a different legal view of the impact of the Single European Act on this problem. I believe that we need to set these legal divergences to one side, as I do not think they help with the practical problem. I do not think they will be easily or quickly resolved. We need practical solutions to the practical problems. We certainly would not quarrel with member states that have long land frontiers if they wish to operate their checks on non-EC nationals in their cities or workplaces. Equally, we do not expect to be criticised if we operate our checks on non-EC nationals at the water's edge. As we are an island, that is the sensible and practical place for us to do so.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. Friend touches on a most important point. Does he agree that, for the suppression of illegal drugs and to control illegal immigration, it is essential to maintain our existing arrangements? Elsewhere in Europe, the countries and police systems of the Economic Community often have available procedural devices—particularly identity card checks and controls over who stays in hotels—not available to the United Kingdom. Were we to change or weaken the arrangements at our airports or seaports, we would not have these other devices at our disposal.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. A country such as France, with an immense land frontier with hundreds of crossing points, some of them small roads—as applies between the North of Ireland and the Republic—has a real problem. Like everybody else, the French want to be protected against massive illegal immigration. The French Government might quite rationally decide that it is not sensible to put too much reliance on border checks but that it is better to have internal means of control. In a private Member's Bill debate, the House has discussed a compulsory identity card system and made its view clear.

[Mr. Hurd]

Thus, I do not think that that path is open to us. A voluntary system is slightly different, but would not solve the problem.

That is an illustration not just of differences of history, but of differences of geography that our partners in the Community as a whole need to take into account. For example, the Dutch, with their important seaports and airports, are conscious of this point. We are certainly not alone in stressing the importance of geography in these matters.

There is a difference between the legal views of this country and others in the European Community. However, that does not mean that we have to rest exactly as we are now. We have already made a change, by introducing a new immigration channel at ports and airports, fusing the British and EC channels. Hon. Members who have been through Heathrow and Gatwick in recent weeks will know that.

What we want to aim at—this is in line with what my hon. Friend was arguing—is that all EC nationals should enter this country with the minimum of immigration checks. There should not be a lengthy questioning procedure on entry to the United Kingdom for citizens of our Community partners or our own citizens. They all now have clear rights under the Single European Act. Citizens of our Community partners should be able to enter the country with the same ease as our citizens. There should simply be the normal requirement that one produces one's passport to show that one is who one says one is. In this case, a person would be shown to be an EC national. I believe that the new streamlined channel is a practical indication of our commitment to the spirit of the Single European Act.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Non-EC nationals who are settled here and in many cases have lived here for a long time are invariably required to obtain re-entry visas when they have travelled overseas. Will the Home Secretary give a clear assurance that, under any new arrangements, these people will not face more onerous procedures? Will he ensure that they have easier access to return to their homes and families in this country than at present?

Mr. Hurd: That position will remain entirely unchanged. There is nothing in the Single European Act or in anything that we are contemplating that would in any way make travel more difficult for the people the hon. Member has mentioned.

The Government's reaction to the report is, as I hope our reply to it makes clear, straightforward. We have a positive commitment to freer travel for Community citizens within the Community. We also have a positive commitment and a need to maintain the checks that are necessary and reasonable to protect our people against terrorism and other serious crime and to maintain the immigration control that we believe is necessary for good relations within our cities.

That is the message which I hope commends itself to the House and which we should try to carry forward in the network of discussions in groups within the Community over the next two or three years.

5.59 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has been willing to explain some of the matters that have been discussed in the Trevi group over the past few months and years. However, several matters have been discussed in the Trevi group and other groups within Europe, but the Home Secretary has not touched upon them. I hope that the Minister will answer some of our questions.

The document has quite far-reaching implications. Like many other EEC documents, it is not quite what it seems. The document will affect the rights of people to move in and to enter Europe. More importantly, it contemplates control of regulations and of policy passing to Ministers in Europe, and day-to-day decisions affecting the movement of people passing to officials hundreds, if not thousands of miles, away at outposts throughout Europe. Yet again, decision-making is moving from this country to the EEC. Ministers have it in mind to create a ring fence around Europe after 1992. They wish to create "fortress Europe". In the documents, they talk about a people's Europe, but, apparently, some people's rights will be more equal than others.

I will make a distinction between the control of crime, terrorism, drugs and so on and the movement of tourists, visitors, students and those who wish to settle in Europe. I agree that frontiers have an important role to play in the fight against crime, but it must be accepted that frontiers are not the complete answer. The Secretary of State will know that many people who are stopped at our frontiers have been followed or been under surveillance for, perhaps, many months beforehand, and the frontier is a convenient point at which to arrest somebody who is suspected of having committed an offence. Although the right hon. Gentleman said by way of introduction that the Chancellor may have something more to say about Customs control, Customs and frontier control go hand in hand in detecting the movement of those who will commit criminal offences.

More important than that, drug traffickers tend not to declare their purpose or occupation when they go through immigration control. Sometimes, the importance of frontiers can be over-estimated. However, it is not part of the Opposition's argument that this country should seek to remove its frontier control.

EEC nationals also have been guilty of crimes in the past. Under the proposals, they will be allowed to move more or less with impunity. In general, the proposals do not encourage me to believe that they will do anything greatly to assist the fight against international crime.

I now refer to the proposals as they affect the movement of people. Several problems are posed by the document. We must consider the effect of the ring fence around Europe. If anybody going to any European port of entry —for example, Athens, Amsterdam or wherever—is refused entry, they are refused not just for that country but for the whole of the European Community. Whether one is a tourist, visitor, asylum seeker, it does not matter. If an individual is refused entry in Athens, he is refused entry not just to Greece but everywhere within the EEC. That is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The standards in each country are different, attitudes are different, and the tests and rules are different and, in many cases, quite subjective.

One can envisage a situation in which someone might arrive at a port of entry at the wrong time, at the wrong

place, and meet the wrong officer, fall foul of that officer, and be refused entry, whereas, if he had arrived a few hours earlier and met a different officer, he might have been admitted. Some of the rules and regulations are quite arbitrary and open to different interpretations.

There is concern that, once refused entry, there is no immediate appeal. What appeal system is contemplated in the event that somebody is refused? There must be a clearly defined statement of what rules will prevail in Europe. It must be clear that the onus of proof is on the challenger. It should not be for somebody seeking to come into Europe to prove his case. There must be an appeal system which works and is seen to work. One of the difficulties in this country is that, often, individuals are told that, if they wish to appeal, they should go back to the country from which they came and appeal there. That appeal can take months if not years. It is not a proper appeal system in the true sense of the word.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I apologise for not hearing everything that the Home Secretary said. One of the points which he did not cover was that, as many hon. Members with constituency interests know, we have a complex but necessary system in the United Kingdom. Is it expected that it will be harmonised with the rest of the EEC? If so, will the Commission and the Council, and not the House, make the rules?

Mr. Darling: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I was going to refer to it slightly later. The Home Secretary did not refer to what harmonisation is proposed. As the matter has been raised, I hope that the Minister will tell us which rules are to be followed. Are they to be those of the United Kingdom or of West Germany, for example? Their rules on asylum seekers are rather different. If we are saying that responsibility for admission to this country can pass to an immigration officer in other European countries, we should be sure that the rules are satisfactory. By no means do I suggest that the United Kingdom's immigration rules are anything like satisfactory. If we are to operate European rules, it must be made clear what those rules are, and they must be rules with which the country and Parliament agree and not simply a lowering to the lowest common denominator throughout Europe.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Do I take it that the Labour party accepts that, if someone goes to any part of the European Community—perhaps through Greece, Italy or France —they should have an automatic right of entry into this country? Is that the implicaton? If not, what is the Labour party's view?

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. I am not suggesting that that is what the Labour party is advocating. I am saying that that is what the document contemplates. When admitted to the EEC, one will be admitted to every country within it. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might also appreciate that, in theory, after 1992 every citizen of the EEC could come to this country and live here with impunity. That is completely different from the situation which has prevailed. Opposition Members are saying that the situation which is contemplated in this document will lead to many more problems than will be solved.

Another major matter of concern is the exchange of information between member countries. It is convenient to refer to the discussions that have been taking place for some time among the Schengen group of countries—that is, France, West Germany and the Benelux countries. They aim to operate a common travel area by 1990. As those countries represent some of the major countries within Europe, it is fair to examine what the Schengen group are proposing. I suspect that the Schengen group is operating a blueprint for what will happen in Europe after 1992. Having regard to which countries they are, it is inconceivable that those countries would set up a system in 1990 only to see it set aside for something completely different two years later.

Schengen is a pilot study. I should be interested to know from the Minister whether this country has observers or participants within the Schengen group of countries. If we examine what Schengen is proposing, we will see what Europe will look like after 1992. It contemplates an exchange of information. From an excerpt from one of the Schengen documents which examine some of the conditions that might prevail after 1992, and the contemplated exchange of information, it is clear that an obligatory declaration in hotels will be necessary. The head of a place of lodgings must ensure that aliens—those who are not EEC nationals—must declare who they are. Those aliens will have to declare their identity to the head of the establishment.

The declaration cards are to be kept and passed to the appropriate authorities. The information is to be exchanged between authorities and presumably, therefore, between countries within the Schengen group. That is going quite a degree further than the residual controls referred to in the Home Secretary's memorandum published with the papers that we are debating.

Already within this country we exchange information about asylum seekers—where they have come from, where they propose to go, and where they were removed to. In a written answer the Minister of State told me recently that we do not systematically provide information. Of course we provide information. It concerns me that a large amount of information is being swapped around Europe and that those whose names are on the lists are not always aware of it.

A short time ago I visited the Harmondsworth detention centre. Having done so, I went to the intelligence unit, which I found very interesting. I found there a computer with over 300,000 names on it. They were the names of people who have had some adverse contact with immigration officials. Sometimes it was nothing more than a person being detained for a short period and then being allowed to go on his way.

That index can be accessed by any immigration officer in this country. Will the Minister of State tell us whether it is intended that immigration officers throughout Europe can access that computer? That would be a drastic extension of what is happening now. What safeguards are there at present? So far as I am aware, the Data Protection Act 1984 does not apply throughout Europe. Even if it did, it is woefully inadequate for this purpose.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that many people are very concerned about the existence of that computer and the number of names on it? Since it is not information about criminal acts, so far as I am aware, but information about the views of immigration officers on people travelling to and from this country, does he agree that it would be reasonable that

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

that information should be made public and should be made available to the people whose names appear on the list?

Mr. Darling: I did not examine each of the 300,000 names, but I was given the opportunity to see how the system worked. The information seemed to be simply remarks made by officers, entered against the person's name. When I was there, I saw how it worked against one individual. When the immigration officer looked at the information, he saw that all that had happened was that every time that person had come into the country he had been stopped. As I was leaving Heathrow, so was he: apparently there was nothing that warranted his detention. If that is the sort of information that is recorded, I can see no reason why people cannot see it.

There is a serious implication if the information is to be accessed throughout Europe. A tourist coming from Torremolinos might find himself detained in a cell somewhere in Europe because the computer thought that he was a terrorist from Turin. That might happen, because mistakes can be made.

What about the landing card index at Lunar house? Anyone who goes there will find that the indexing system is not on the official tour. All landing cards are being computerised. There must be legislation governing the provision of information. People whose names are on these computers have a right to know what information is being held, by whom and for what purpose. If the information is to be available across Europe, before the Government agree to any proposals the House must be invited to legislate on the matter.

Mr. Madden: I was most interested in what my hon. Friend said about the computer list at Harmondsworth. He will know that the staff at Harmondsworth are employed by Group 4 under a contract that that company has recently won. My hon. Friend will also know that Group 4, like other security companies, is a subscriber to the Economic League. He will know that the Economic League is always successful in obtaining information through companies which subscribe to it. The mass of information held on the computer may well be available to the Economic League for purposes unknown but likely to be sinister. Does my hon. Friend agree that that should be investigated urgently and that there should be effective safeguards to ensure that the information is not passed to third parties, including the Economic League?

Mr. Darling: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The more information that is held on computers and the more that third parties that can get access to it, the greater the scope for abuse. For the sake of accuracy, I should point out that the staff in the intelligence unit are Home Office staff and are not employed by a private company. The Group 4 staff are employed in the detention unit at Harmondsworth.

On the common visa regime, I understand that the proposal is that all countries whose nationals require visas to enter any EEC country will be on one list. The Home Secretary should publish the list at the earliest opportunity. It would be useful to see it. I understand that additions are contemplated.

Visas by their very nature cause injustice. They are discriminatory. We require nationals from six countries to have visas. It is instructive to know why visas are required. On my useful visit to Heathrow I made inquiries about why, suddenly, queues build up for those from some countries but not from others. More flights come from New York every week than from Dhaka or other countries on the Indian subcontinent, yet more and more nationals from the Indian subcontinent were being stopped and queues were building up. The union for the immigration service put pressure on the Government to introduce visas.

When I asked what criteria applied, I was given an example by one senior officer. He said that he and his wife had gone out for dinner at a Thai restaurant the week before. He had noticed that there were more and more Thai restaurants and he had come to the conclusion that because Thai restaurants tended to have Thai staff, there was a chance that more Thais would seek to enter the country to work rather than to visit. Therefore, immigration officials had started to question people coming from Thailand. That is not the sort of objective criterion that we want for visas. When the list is published, we should see what criteria are to apply.

I understand that Turkey may find itself on the list of visa countries. That would be an interesting development, having regard to the fact that that country is seeking to enter the EEC within the next 10 years or so.

There are additional problems. Portugal wishes to maintain links with its former colonies. I give but one example. I understand that Portugal wishes to ensure that citizens living in Macau, a former colony, should be allowed to enter Portugal. If so, they would be able to enter the whole of the EEC. Yet, just across the water from Macau is Hong Kong, a colony of the United Kingdom. We do not propose to have the same arrangement. As a result, the visa regime will cause difficulties and anomalies. I will be interested to hear the Government's policy on that.

Visas also tend to encourage refusals. In the absence of a proper appeal system they can be discriminatory, which, I suspect, they are intended to be in many cases. When one looks at the entry clearance figures for grants and refusals, one is struck by how haphazard and discriminatory the policy can be. For example, a person from a black African country is 10 times more likely to be refused entry to this country than a person from South Africa. If we compare Australia and Pakistan, we find that the same number of applications are made, yet the refusal rate for Pakistan is far greater than that for Australia.

The visa regime brings me to a major problem with asylum seekers and refugees. As we know, sadly, the phenomenon of refugees is growing. The ring fence will cause problems. I understand that the Schengen group is thinking of fingerprinting applicants for asylum or refugee status. They may be required to carry identity cards. We should give much consideration to that.

Considering again the question of controls, I am concerned about what is proposed. I accept that the Secretary of State is not keen on identity cards and I accept the Government's word that we are not to have an ID card system, at least so far. Very often one Government pronouncement is followed swiftly by another from a higher and greater source. If we believe the report in today's *Guardian*, it appears that these matters are to be taken away from the control of the Home Secretary and are to be run from No. 10 itself.

Internal controls have serious implications. Frontiers have advantages because they avoid internal controls.

What will happen to the 15 or 20 million EEC nationals who are legally settled here? Will they be subject to being stopped on entry and being asked to declare who they are? If we are saying that they are legally settled here and are free to set up businesses and so on, but that they may be subject to controls when leaving and re-entering the country, that is wholly undesirable. That is something that I would like the Minister to clarify.

It is all very well to say that we will not have compulsory identity cards in this country or, indeed, in Europe, but my fear is that some of our citizens and some people living in this country may be encouraged to have voluntary identity cards. Just like the banker's card, an identity card may not be compulsory, but it might be a good idea to carry it and certainly "not to leave home without it".

The controls envisaged by the Schengen group are quite far-reaching. One proposal suggests that aliens can cross external borders only at agreed points of entry and at fixed opening times, and that unauthorised external border crossing would lead to punishment or to a fine. Clearly Schengen is proposing far more than that to which the Secretary of State alluded. It is therefore important that the Minister should make clear the Government's policy for internal controls.

The document contemplates that decisions will no longer be made in this Parliament, but by Ministers. That concerns me, too, because under the Official Secrets Bill —shortly, I assume, to become the Official Secrets Act 1989—much of what is decided will be out of sight, out of mind and most certainly secret.

It appears that we shall see the creation of an industry of information-swapping, with no real supervision. It will create a ring-fence regime that will simply be a nursery for random decision-making, because many of the people making the decisions know that they will not be subject to review.

I shall refer to the document of the immigration service union, which it prepared last year in support of its pay claim, because it is indicative of the way in which random decisions are made. I hope that the Minister will pay special attention to this, because I made passing reference to it at the last Question Time and he was rather dismissive of my remarks. In support of wanting more money, the immigration service union said:

"For example, in Dhaka, one of the biggest immigration service-supported overseas posts, settlement cases are decided roughly on the basis of one issue, one deferral and one refusal for every three interviews conducted."

A practice whereby the first person who applies gets in, the next one does not and the third one is deferred does not appear to be an especially objective way of going about business. It does not inspire confidence. However, it does not surprise me to learn that, shortly after that, people were urging that Members of Parliament should have the right to intervene on behalf of their constituents whose friends and relatives were being further curtailed.

We need to state clearly the rights of movement, to know what rules will be established and to have a clear review system. We do not want to give a free hand to people who will discriminate and make arbitrary decisions without challenge. We are at risk—I put it no higher than that—of creating a bureaucracy that would be worthy of the Tsarist regime in its last days before the revolution. It is certainly not the people's Europe that is contemplated in the introduction to the document.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: No, I shall not give way because this is a short debate.

We believe that the free movement of people should mean that people are free to move unless there is good reason to curtail, prevent or temporarily stop them. The onus must be on those who want to make that stop to make their case. Without clearly stated rules, without review, accountability and supervision, the proposals would bring limited benefit and many problems. They would, without doubt, create injustices. It is a matter that is sometimes out of public sight, but I hope that the Minister will deal with some of those problems in his reply and not simply confine himself to general statements.

We know from the working of our immigration rules and our own regime that great difficulties are caused and great injustices done. I do not want to see those magnified and manifested throughout Europe. That would be undesirable and would be one of the worst examples of what can go wrong when one creates a European-wide bureaucracy that has no effective control, because ministerial or civil service supervision is absolutely no substitute for proper supervision by Parliament.

6.13 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It has been interesting to hear the two Front Bench speeches. However, I was astonished to hear at the end of what was obviously a well-informed speech, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) complain of the possibility of a Tsarist bureaucracy which offered people no control of ministerial decisions. Instead, Ministers would sit around a table making decision that would affect the freedom and lives of us all. He said that was one of the greatest dangers facing us. He is, of course, right in what he said, but, if that is the case, why on earth did only a handful of Labour Members vote against the Single European Act from which that all stemmed? It was an inevitable consequence of the Single European Act that there would be majority voting on measures that applied to every citizen in this country and throughout Europe. Therefore, while that is a problem, we should realise that it is not one that has stemmed simply from the Government.

Mr. Spearing: The Tory Government put it through.

Mr. Taylor: Only a handful of Labour Members were there at that time. Of course I accept that it was put forward by the Government, but if there had been more than a handful opposing it, the result may have been different.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman may be right, but, of course, the Single European Act of which he speaks, if my memory is correct, had its Second Reading in April 1986, but its Committee stage of the whole House and remaining stages in June or July. My recollection is that on most of those occasions very many more than a handful of Opposition Members voted against it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will check what he has said.

Mr. Taylor: I have checked it many times. I can say that the hon. Gentleman was there fighting for parliamentary freedom, as he always does honourably. He was there for

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every vote, including an all-night vote on a Thursday through to a Friday. I just wish that more had been there to fight against something that is a big problem.

Just as interesting was the splendid speech of the Home Secretary, because we heard from him of the new change in the Government's attitude to Europe and to Europe measures. He used most unusual words about this communication. He talked about a divergence with Europe, he talked about misunderstandings by Europe and he pointed out that he could not accept some of the proposals put forward. There is no doubt that, over recent weeks, we have seen a change of heart by the Government —especially since the Prime Minister has made her concern clear about directives, the extent of directives and the extent to which those directives are unnecessarily bringing in harmonisation and the undermining of our liberty. However, what I believe everyone in the House and outside is entitled to know is exactly what we can do about the proposals in that communication.

When I first read the proposals, I thought that, unlike most of them, about which we can do nothing—once the Council decides something by a majority, it applies to Britain whether we like it or not—on this horrific programme, which would severely affect our national security, we could stop anything happening. That is because, as the Home Secretary rightly said, a general declaration is stuck at the end of the Single European Act:

"Nothing in these provisions shall affect the right of Member States to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of controlling immigration from third countries, and to combat terrorism, crime, the traffic in drugs and illicit trading in works of art and antiques."

My understanding was that, because we put in that proviso, there was nothing that the Council of Ministers could do that would necessarily apply here if we thought that it was interfering with our national interests. On the other hand, what worried me was that it was far from clear from the Home Secretary's comments whether the annexe to the final Act is a matter that has the full force of law for us and for the Community. I hope that the Minister will make the position abundantly clear: is it or is it not a fact that, irrespective of what the Council of Ministers does, we can stick to that general declaration and basically ignore what is decided by the Council of Ministers?

I appreciate that this is a constantly changing situation. Although I know that the Home Secretary will give a sincere assurance on this point, because he is certainly one of the most honourable of our Ministers, we must accept that circumstances change. I can remember a Labour Treasury Minister giving an equally sincere assurance concerning the sixth directive. He said that, once the sixth directive had been approved, none of Britain's zero rates could ever be affected by any of the institutions of the Community. We know that that has been overturned at least twice recently, because of the expanding power and decision making of the European institution. We must know what was intended when we passed the legislation. Do the Government believe that they have the right to reject anything decided by the Council of Ministers?

We need to know whether the proposals on firearms control, drugs, visas and extradition ar subject to majority voting or unanimity. It is terribly important to find out. If unanimity is desired, we can call a halt if we consider that the proposals are nuts or are dangerous to our security. If majority voting is required, it means that we can do nothing about the proposals unless a lot of other member states agree with us. We are in a difficult position as the great majority of Community members are desperately anxious to push on with anything that they consider will lead to more European union and co-operation. Britain, of course, is becoming increasingly worried about the implications of such proposals. When the Minister winds up I hope that he will be able to tell us whether the proposals, individually or collectively, are subject to unanimity or majority voting.

The firearms proposals are serious. The House passed important new laws to control the use and the carrying of firearms and we have now introduced tough penalties. We need to know whether it is possible for the EEC to undermine those penalties by introducing harmonised proposals. Apart from the measures before us now, we know that there is a directive before the EEC currently on the mutual recognition of firearm certificates. Basically, that means that, if anyone wanders into this country as a visitor or for any other purpose, he can bring any weapon he likes with him so long as he has a certificate from his country. Therefore, it is okay for someone to wander down Oxford street with a Kalashnikov. Will the decision on that proposal be subject to majority voting or will it be subject to a unanimous decision?

The drug problem is even more serious. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) spoke of central European countries where it is as easy to move within Europe as it is to travel between London and Manchester. Given that the harmonised proposals will affect such countries, imagine the potential for the drugs industry. I hope that the Minister will read the careful statement given by Mr. Giovanni Falcone, who is one of the brave leaders of the Sicilian magistrates. He is extremely concerned that the Single European Act and the proposals we are now discussing will lead to an extension of the Mafia's activities. We know that that organisation specialises in drugs and controls much of that industry.

It would be appalling if we had a common standard for visas, as that would be for no good purpose. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us some advice about what is said about extradition. The document before us is a communication from Lord Cockfield, who was our previous chap in Brussels. He said that one of the proposals would be a Community directive on extradition and crime. On page 28 of the communiqué, he referred to convention proposals that had been agreed by most Community countries.

The convention on extradition was ratified by Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. It was not, of course, ratified by the United Kingdom. The first protocol was approved by almost everyone, but not the United Kingdom. The same was true of the second protocol.

The convention and the two protocols contain some terrifying proposals. If extradition is requested, the country concerned does not need to agree to it if it believes a political issue is involved. We know what that means to some countries. The proposals also affect capital punishment, as countries may reserve the right not to send someone back to another Community member state unless it has the assurance that capital punishment does not apply or, if it exists, will not be carried out. Obviously that would undermine any prospect of the House of Commons, if it so desired in the future, reintroducing capital punishment.

Our law on capital punishment would be extremely strange if it applied to our countrymen only and not to those who had gone to other Community countries.

The argument about capital punishment may seem strange, but the Minister must know what is happening to our Sunday trading laws, because we are awaiting a decision from the European Court. I note that the Minister is smiling, which is rather surprising, but he will have seen the long comprehensive answers I have had from Ministers about that matter. Those answers have made it abundantly clear that, if people break the Sunday trading laws, it is now impossible in many areas to get an injunction to stop them.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I agree that Sunday trading is an extremely serious subject. I was only smiling at the ingenuity of my hon. Friend who has managed to introduce that difficult subject into a short debate on EEC controls on the movement of people.

Mr. Taylor: This debate is short not because of lack of time, but because the Government slipped through a clever little motion on Friday to say that we could have only an hour and a half on this subject.

I am sorry that the Minister believes that I have been ingenious by discussing Sunday trading. Does he appreciate that people in Britain are concerned when they find that the laws they have passed are undermined or could be undermined by Euro-decisions?

We have also had proposals from the Belgian presidency about the way in which extradition is to be applied, which is rather strange, given how that country behaved about Father Ryan. The proposals under discussion today would undermine our freedom to control crime, drugs and immigration. We have a special problem regarding Macau. We have made a decision, rightly or wrongly, not to allow people to come here from Hong Kong, except in the most extraordinary circumstances. The Minister is aware, however, that anyone from an overseas territory held by an EEC state is entitled to come here. Macau, which is just around the corner from Hong Kong, is covered by that agreement. That arrangement will become even more relevant once the proposals go through.

It is encouraging that the Government are becoming concerned about the volume of European legislation. They are concerned that the institutions of the Commission and the Community are extending their powers and that more and more laws and Community decisions are being applied to this country whether we like it or not. The Minister must be well aware of some of the recent decisions reached by the European Court and the Commission, which will affect every person here. I hope that does not make him smile.

I know that we have a limited amount of time to debate the proposals, but, given their frightening nature, I hope that the Government will think carefully about what we can do about them. If the Minister sought to delay the discussion and implementation of the proposals, that would only hold things up for a while. Although we might jump up and down and make strong speeches about Euro-bureaucracy, we would be unable to stop the process because of the Single European Act.

Because there is such a great desire on the part of Germany, France and Italy especially, to press ahead to form a unified state, we should start talking seriously about the possibility of a two-tier Europe. That would be good for us and good for those who want to get on and establish that unified state. We should also be concerned that, where these issues are concerned, democracy is disappearing. On matters of immigration, firearms and the rest of it, the House of Commons is basically irrelevant since Ministers will sit around a table and decide what they consider to be appropriate.

This is a desperately serious situation. Even if the Minister disagrees with everything I have said and even if he wants to ignore my speech, will he please, please answer the two basic questions I asked the Home Secretary? Number one, does the annexe to the Single European Act mean we can do what we think is in our national interest, irrespective of EEC decisions? We know that such protection does not apply elsewhere, but I thought that it did in this regard. Is that true or not? Do we have the backing of law or not?

Secondly, will all these desperately important issues, including immigration control and firearms control, be decided by majority vote or by unanimity? Sadly, this is the only brief occasion we have to discuss these important matters. Parliament has ceased effectively to be the body which passes the majority of our laws. We now work under a different arrangement, under the Council of Ministers and the Commission. This is our one opportunity to ask questions. I hope that we shall receive clear answers.

6.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is always more agreeable listening to the Home Secretary speaking as a diplomat than when he is speaking as the atavistic exponent of his party's views on the maintenance of law and order. He was in the first vein when introducing this debate and made a relatively uncontroversial speech, as was appropriate in considering this subject.

Important though it is to make progress towards opening up the internal market, and to do so at the speed to which we are committed by our implementation of the Single Act, we must do so in a practical way, taking account of the differences which exist in respect of the handling of the major issues of crime, drugs and immigration, particularly from third countries, that prevail in the member countries of the Community.

The Home Secretary was less than frank when he spoke of the objective of this amendment to Community law as the progressive relaxation of frontiers. Indeed, it is impossible to read article 13 of the Single European Act as such an objective, for it speaks of the creation of an internal market without internal frontiers. There was little in the Home Secretary's speech that recognised the hope that that position will be achieved by 1992.

Nor was there more than a passing formal acknowledgement in the right hon. Gentleman's remarks of the desirability for this country, and in particular for our commerce and industry, of opening up these frontiers by that year, since the existing frontier barriers between the member countries of the European Community constitute a serious and major addition to the costs of exporting and place a considerable commercial burden on our enterprise which we would wish to see removed.

The possibility, of which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) spoke—of a two-tier Europe —would in almost no area be more unattractive than in this. The idea that the Schengen group should progress to

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the removal of intra-Community controls while we retain the barriers to trade which now exist, would put this country at a disadvantage which would accentuate our problems, by virtue of our geography, in trading on the periphery of continental Europe. It is right that we should take the opportunity of this debate to emphasise that that is the prime purpose of seeking to implement section 13 of the Single European Act in the manner that has been agreed in principle by this House.

Naturally, the attention of the debate so far has focused on the exceptional declaration which accompanies the Single European Act:

"Nothing in these provisions shall affect the right of Member States to take such measures as they consider necessary for the purpose of controlling immigration from third countries, and to combat terrorism, crime, the traffic in drugs and illicit trading in works of art and antiques."

The hon. Member for Southend, East was right to draw attention to the importance of that provision, and I do not believe that any British Government would have been ready to agree the Single European Act without such a declaration, for it is clearly necessary, in recognition of the historic differences in the manner of controlling immigration within the European Community, that provisions we made for removing frontiers should recognise that there are problems, some of which were mentioned by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), in an intervention.

I appreciate the Home Secretary's generally pragmatic approach to dealing with these problems and to his recognition that more will be achieved by co-operation than by striking attitudes. I hope that the negotiations will be conducted in that way rather than in the posture of Ministers wrapping flags round themselves and insulating ourselves from the process of the European Community.

The Home Secretary said that there had been something of a flap about the remarks made by Sir Leon Brittan. I agree that Sir Leon's comments—I understand that they were made in this country to a police audience—pointed the way forward. It was helpful of Sir Leon to say that, under the Commission's proposals, it would still be possible for the authorities to carry out spot checks at internal borders and that the abolition of green or red channels would not prevent that. That was a welcome interpretation of the Commission's views.

There are in the Government's memorandum occasions when it almost seems as though they are trying to pick quarrels with the Commission for the sake of it and are seeking to find differences where none exist. I cannot think that the Commission will take exception to the view that the Government express in paragraph 10 of the memorandum, where they say that the retention of minimum checks for the purpose of distinguishing British citizens or European Community nationals from non-Community nationals

"is compatible with the Treaty, and with the objectives adopted by member states collectively".

It is not correct to say that the Government in that matter are necessarily at odds with the European Commission.

The whole country is conscious that it is sensible to recognise that the police must be assisted in the fight against crime, particularly against terrorism and the growing menace of the importation of drugs into Britain, and that they should have power to stop and investigate at all convenient places, being places most likely to reveal breaches of the law or to apprehend malefactors, and the natural borders of our islands are such places.

What we are seeking to achieve by implementing the opening of our country's frontiers is in no way incompatible with allowing the police to continue to use those facilities. It is equally clear that it is not in the nation's interest for long queues of lorries and cars that impede internal traffic within the European Community to disappear in continental Europe while, at our frontiers, they remain as they are or become even longer. The Home Secretary is right to believe that that practical problem is surmountable. He drew attention to certain changes made in recent weeks to the channelling at our airports of those holding European passports. I am sure that such a pragmatic approach will commend itself to all hon. Members.

6.41 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I wish to register both appreciation and concern. My appreciation is for the fact that on this occasion the Home Secretary did not explicitly or implicitly attempt to slur the Labour party as in any way supporting terrorism or people who threaten the nation's security, peddle drugs or are otherwise involved in criminal activities. I also appreciate the fact that he did not accuse the Labour party of supporting illegal immigration.

However, my concern rests on the tone of the comments in the Government's explanatory memorandum about how they regard non-EC nationals, including non-EC nationals who have lived in this country for a long time. The document states:

"In the Government's view, checks on EC nationals (including British citizens) can and should be reduced to the absolute minimum required in order to distinguish them with confidence from non-Community nationals;"

That is a very neat summary of the Government's view that runs through all their immigration policies and procedure; it is that all those who are not British citizens, and, in this case, not EC nationals, are inevitably and, almost by definition, to be viewed without confidence. They are always to be suspected of being liars, intending to deceive and to circumvent by any means possible the legal procedures for entering this country.

The Government's explanatory memorandum also states:

"In the Government's view, therefore, the way forward is to combine measures to strengthen the external frontier of the Community, and other forms of co-operation between states, with such measures as are required at the national frontier to control the immigration of non-Community nationals into the United Kingdom."

I hope that when the Minister of State replies to this short debate, he will explain what that paragraph means. I am extremely concerned about what the phrase "measures as are required" means. The last paragraph on page 11 of the letter from Lord Cockfield states:

"A package of measures (identity checks, curbs on the use of forged travel documents and organised illegal immigrants traffic) is being studied by the Immigration Group."

Following my earlier intervention, the Home Secretary tonight gave a clear assurance that no significant changes will be made in the procedures relating to non-EC nationals, non-British citizens or nationals of third world countries, many of whom have lived in this country for a long time. We were told that they would not have to face any significant or onerous new procedures.

As so often, I must tell the Minister that those people know that the Government regard them without confidence. They understand that the Government suspect them and that the Government, and many of their supporters, regard them as an unwelcome presence in this country. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will be able to reinforce and re-emphasise what the Home Secretary said about there being no new procedures.

The Home Secretary said that there are new channelling arrangements at Heathrow. Is there any possibility of a new channel being introduced for non-British citizens and non-EC nationals under those arrangements? It would be absolutely intolerable if that were the case and it is important that, when he winds up, the Minister gives a clear assurance that there will not be any new arrangements of that sort. Such arrangements would serve only to strengthen the alienation, and lack of trust and confidence felt by many non-British citizens and non-EC nationals who have good reason for wanting to travel through and outside the Common Market. Such people need that reassurance tonight, and I hope that the Minister will be able to give it.

6.47 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On occasions such as this, I feel as though I am in a county council chamber discussing the possibility of sending a letter to Whitehall asking whether it would be good enough to consider our views. Due to the Single European Act and the way that the European Community operates, we have less and less power over what happens to this country's nationals or the movements of people within the EC.

In the Government's memorandum, reported by Lord Cockfield in October 1987, during the British presidency of the European Commission, they initiated the idea that there should be some harmonisation of immigration and refugee law throughout the European member states.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) made an excellent speech, in which he demonstrated the double standards that exist in the European Community. There is talk of free movement of EC nationals throughout the Community but no talk of free movement of peoples who are not EC passport holders, but who are legal, long-term residents of one of the member states.

It seems extraordinary that, when a pensioners' group in north London wishes to arrange a day trip to Calais, its members have to look around to see how many of them are Caribbean and cannot therefore go on the trip because they cannot obtain visas from the French embassy here in time. The same applies to Indian people and others. That is a serious and nasty experience for those people, because they do not have the same freedom of movement as others.

The British Government are hardly in a position to lecture others on this subject when we think back to the views that the Government have expressed and the legislation passed through this House, which has largely removed the rights of hon. Members to intervene on immigration matters. The Government passed the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 and have failed to face up to the many legitimate criticisms made of their attitude to refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Page 6 of the Government's response to the EC document says:

> "The Government accepts the need for closer co-operation between member states in asylum matters and, in particular, for an agreement on the determination of which member state is responsible for considering asylum requests."

I view that statement with an ominous feeling. I see behind it a levelling down of the treatment of asylum seekers to the lowest common denominator in Europe. The Government's attitude in the case of Viraj Mendis, when they refused to consider the offer of a third country, make me suspicious about that statement.

The Home Secretary's final comment on the EC document said:

> "The conclusion of Immigration Ministers at Munich concerning airports, to which the report refers, was conditional upon agreement to abolish controls on non-EC nationals. As already indicated in this Memorandum, no such agreement has been reached."

I suspect that the Government do not plan to reach agreement. I and people in my constituency and others fear that there will be two standards throughout the Community in 1992.

I want to refer briefly to "The Migrant and Refugee Manifesto" published at a press conference in the House this morning. That deals with real rights for 16 million people across Europe who are largely denied the same sort of rights that exist for EC nationals. They do not have rights of movement or, in most cases, the right to vote, despite the fact that they pay taxes, and often they do not have a right to employment. We are creating a two-tier economy in Europe, with the semi-legal economy of migrant workers in low-paid jobs in sweatshop industries being treated as second-class citizens throughout Europe.

The manifesto demands 10 points to be applied throughout Europe. They are the right to stay; the right to family reunion; free movement within the EC; full social and political rights; full legal rights; no to racism, fascism and police brutality; no to repatriation and deportations; no to economic racism; the right to organise independently, and an amnesty to all unauthorised workers. That would go a long way towards removing the fear that exists in many migrant communities in Britain and other EC member states. I hope that when the Minister replies to this brief debate he will refer to the general points in the manifesto, which I understand is being sent to him.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the harmonisation of the law in the areas that would be necessary to give effect to those rights?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes, that is a fair point. My point was that the harmonisation of the law is taking place for EC nationals, but the same rights are being deliberately excluded from non-EC nationals resident in EC member states, partly as a result of the Government's actions. It is for those reasons that I hope that the Minister will give serious consideration to the legitimate points that have been raised on behalf of a large number of migrant and refugee organisations.

6.51 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I am delighted to have the opportunity to reply to this short but interesting debate, particularly since I spent this morning at a place where in a few years' time we shall be looking carefully to see just how frontier controls and checks are working post-1992. I spent the morning at the Eurotunnel shuttle terminal at Cheriton and at the exhibition centre there. With me were senior immigration

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officials whose job it is to see how, at the shuttle terminal at Cheriton, we can streamline frontier checks while keeping what we consider to be the essential element of those checks when the Channel tunnel comes into action in June 1993. When it opens, the Eurotunnel, the largest building programme in Europe this century, will be a major contributor to, and beneficiary from, the single market that we are discussing.

I followed the speech made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) with interest, but he was in a muddle, although a well-meaning muddle, about the document. On the one hand he argued that the Commission's proposals were not effective enough. I remind him that in his opening remarks my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stressed strongly that practical co-operation was often more effective than treaties. That practical co-operation between our police force and European police forces is developing all the time in such matters as the seizure of drug traffickers' assets, extradition and mutual legal assistance.

On the other hand, the hon. Gentleman was arguing that the document would be too effective. He talked about fortress Europe which, if it came into being, would have too stringent an effect upon the movement of people. I remind the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), whose remarks I followed with the closest interest, that paragraph 8 of the Home Office statement on the Community document states clearly the areas in which we differ from the Commission. For example, we believe that

"the Communication and the report misunderstand and seriously under-estimate the contribution which frontier checks make to essential defences against terrorism, drug smuggling and other crime, does not accept that either the progress so far achieved, or the measures under contemplation, would justify the complete abolition of frontier checks within the Community; and differs"—

this may be the most important point that I shall address to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East—

"from the Commission on the implications of the Single European Act, particularly as regards the treatment of third country nationals."

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central implied that someone who had been refused entry at Athens might also be refused entry at Heathrow for that reason alone. That may be the case if the Commission's view prevails, but our firm view is that we shall continue to operate United Kingdom immigration controls at our ports and airports under British rules.

One point on which I must contradict the hon. Gentleman is that Group 4 does not have access to the computer services systems of the immigration service.

Mr. Darling: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me I shall not give way as I have very little time. *[Interruption.]* With the greatest respect, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) was not in the Chamber so he cannot know what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said.

Group 4 does not have access to computer service systems of the immigration service. Information on the immigration service headquarters computer is registered under the Data Protection Act 1984. It is exempted from disclosure under exemption nine.

The working group on immigration is considering a common list of persons who would be refused a visa by EC countries. The United Kingdom would, of course, require primary legislation in order to refuse a visa to someone simply at the request of another member state. It is clear from the present legal position that we cannot do that.

The Schengen approach, to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred, envisages the abolition of all frontier controls and is probably more relevant between countries with large land frontiers with each other than in the case of an island such as Britain. We are not proceeding down the Schengen route. We are interested in what is being done. We understand that it intends to rely on internal controls, but we as an island do not need to do that, and, by tradition, we prefer not to.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked about those who legally settled here as did the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). There is no reason why, either in our or the Commission's view of 1992, a person settled in the United Kingdom should have any additional difficulty in returning here. I remind the hon. Member for Bradford, West, who has a particular expertise on immigration subjects, that we are talking today about controls and checks at frontiers, not about rights of residence. There is no question of 1992 affecting the right of a person now settled here to stay here.

There is nothing sinister about the exchange of basic information on asylum seekers, such as the number arriving, their nationalities, decisions taken, or what we know about organised illegal immigration. We remain completely responsible for the determination of asylum applications in the United Kingdom. The ad hoc group that covers that area is interested in trends, not in individuals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, spoke on a subject about which he feels deeply and which he has raised with me before. Some of the topics dealt with in the Commission's report relate to goods—for example, licit drugs, works of art and antiques. Proposals in those matters would normally come under the qualified majority proposals. But in the basic area of the freedom of movements of people and their personal luggage our clear view is that the proposals must be made on the basis of unanimity. We have made that clear to the Commission in respect of its proposed directive on firearms, about which my hon. Friend particularly asked. We shall continue to press our view that that should be based on article 235, which relates to frontier controls and carries the power of veto, rather than on article 100A, which requires only a qualified majority.

I stress to the House that our approach to these matters is very much that of making the most progress possible towards 1992 and lifting the burden of frontier checks and formalities to the greatest possible extent for European Community citizens while retaining immigration checks for residents of third countries and the ability to prevent the movement of illicit drugs and terrorist weapons. This is practical progress in keeping with the importance we attach to the completion of the Community's internal market. I believe that this progress is of great value, not just in treaties and rhetoric but in expanding the markets for business and services for the Community market of 320 million people.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10412/88 relating to the abolition of controls of persons at intra-community frontiers; and endorses the Government's view that in considering the relaxation of frontier controls within the European Community the Government must keep in place necessary measures to control terrorism, drug trafficking and other crime, and immigration from non-community countries.

Public Procurement

7.1 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European community Documents Nos. 7496/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 24th October 1988 and 5909/89 relating to public works contracts and 10497/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 2nd May 1989 relating to compliance with Community rules on procedures for the award of public supply and public works contracts; endorses the view that revisions to Directive 71/305/EEC are necessary to improve public purchasing throughout the Community; welcomes the Government's endeavour to secure a satisfactory outcome in discussions on the proposal on public works contracts in the Council of Ministers; and supports the Government's intention to press for a means of improving compliance with Community rules on procedures for the award of public supply and public works contracts which places appropriate responsibility on Member States.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have to announce that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and other hon. Members.

Mr. Brooke: The debate is about two of the proposals that the Commission has made with the purpose of opening up public procurement.

We debated the first of the Commission's proposals, which was intended to improve the supplies directives, in Standing Committee in December 1986. Later that month the Commission submitted the first version of its proposal to amend the works directive; a year later, it submitted a measure intended to secure compliance with that directive and with the supplies directives; and it introduced proposals to cover the so-called excluded sectors last autumn. We shall be debating the proposals on the excluded sectors on another occasion, but it has been agreed that it is appropriate to deal today with both the proposal to amend the works directive and that to improve compliance.

Although the proposal on works was submitted in December 1986, the Commission made significant changes to it about a year ago. The Select Committee on European Legislation considered that the amended proposal raised issues of legal and political importance and recommended it for debate. Unfortunately it was not possible to arrange a debate before the Council of Ministers adopted a common position. However, I did try to keep the Chairman of the Committee informed of developments in Brussels, and I am glad now to have the benefit of the views of the House before the directive comes to the Council for adoption on the basis of the re-examined proposals that the Commission has now submitted.

In the case of compliance, there have so far been only initial discussions in Brussels. It has already become clear, however, that the Council is likely to reach a common position that differs in a number of important ways from the Commission's proposals. I believe that what is emerging may prove more acceptable to the House than the Commission's proposal, but I have to say that the new texts will require very careful examination.

Before going further, I should like to say a word about the procurement directives generally. They were originally adopted long before the present programme to complete the single market. The works directive was adopted before

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we joined the Community. The existing directives were put in place because the Community wanted to provide a framework that helped ensure that the obligation under the treaty not to discriminate on grounds of nationality was fulfilled. The same purpose was behind the Commission's inclusion of public procurement in its White Paper on the internal market in 1985, and Heads of Government have since given support to the objective of opening up public procurement more fully.

Changes to the supplies directives have been in force since last January. Changes to the works directive are clearly in prospect—and we can expect measures to be adopted which will make it easier to enforce compliance. The Government have welcomed those initiatives because we believe that the administrative burdens that the directives may impose are outweighed by the contribution they can make to the achievement of a single market.

I accept that others may hold different views on the balance of advantage. A large number of people have helped us by commenting on the proposals and many have disagreed with parts of them. I greatly value the willing co-operation and assistance that they have given. I suggest to them that they changes that we are discussing to the works directive improve the chances of contractors in this country winning business in other member states of the Community and that it is to our advantage to ensure that adequate procedures are available to make sure that the rules are obeyed throughout the Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): What procedures?

Mr. Brooke: I repeat—to ensure that adequate procedures are available to make sure that the rules are obeyed throughout the Community. I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has put his name to the amendment and I am sure that he will speak to it in due course. I promise that I will respond to him at that stage.

I propose to highlight the main changes that it is proposed should be made to the works directive to make it more effective, and to draw attention to one or two points that we think will cause difficulty. I will then comment on the changes to the Commission's proposal to improve compliance that are now being discussed in Brussels.

The proposal to amend the works directive includes a number of changes which are similar to those adopted last year in relation to the supplies directive and which we were able to support. More time is to be allowed for contractors to respond to advertisements and to invitations to tender. Contracting authorities are required to publish notices of contracts they have awarded and to give explanations to eliminate candidates or tenderers on request. They are also required to publish the essential characteristics of works contracts above the threshold as soon as decisions on planning are taken. Other measures to improve transparency and to assist the monitoring of compliance include the retention of records and the provision of statistics.

Contrary to some suggestions, the proposal does not limit the use of the so-called restricted procedure. That is the procedure used by most of our contracting authorities and involves the selection of tenderers from those firms that express an interest. This reduces the burden on contracting authorities and also on contractors, since the cost of submitting tenders can be very high. Contracting authorities will need, of course, to be able to show that they make their selection of tenderers without discriminating against candidates from other member states.

There are exclusions for works declared secret, those that are subject to national security considerations and those that need to be procured under other international rules. The proposal replaces the previous limited exemptions from the open and restricted procedures by negotiated procedures involving one or more contractors, with a call for competition in some cases. This should reduce the incidence of single tendering and provide greater opportunities for contractors without imposing undue burdens on contracting authorities. Similarly, new provisions on the use of standards will increase the ability of contractors to compete throughout the Community while taking in from the supplies directive derogations that were negotiated there to protect value for money.

The directive is also amended to catch any form of contract for civil engineering or building works let by, to begin with, Government Departments and local authorities, but it is not intended to apply to contracts to be let by management contractors. The field of application is extended to encompass bodies which meet criteria for defining "bodies governed by public law" and to include rules on the award of concession contracts and the award of works contracts to third parties by concessionaires. In addition, authorities covered by the directive that fund more than 50 per cent. of the cost of a contract for civil engineering works or certain building works must make compliance with the directive a condition of the funding. The threshold, however, is to be raised to 5 million ecu —about £3·3 million at today's rates. The fivefold increase means a considerable lightening of administrative burdens on contracting authorities.

There are a number of improvements intended to benefit small firms. For example, the publication of contract award notices should help them to target main contractors. There is a separate provision allowing contracting authorities to ask tenderers to indicate any share of the contract that they intend to sub-contract to third parties. To make it clear that contractual freedom is not affected, the Council agreed to say in its common position that information given to the contracting authority is without prejudice to the question of where responsibility lies for the contract. The Commission, accepting a suggested amendment from the European Parliament, now wishes the provision to say:

"Without prejudice to the question of final responsibility."

This may be acceptable although we would prefer to see an explicit reference to contractual responsibility.

An area where the existing directive and the proposal were unclear was whether contracting authorities could require tenderers to be quality assured. It is important that they should be able to require that, since the Government mean to increase the use they make of quality assurance. The Council agreed that technical specifications should be defined in the directive to include requirements for quality assurance. It helped to be able to say that a standard on quality assurance had been adopted at European level that national standards bodies would be required to implement. It was a British standard, BS5750, that was adopted, and I pay tribute to those responsible for its development and for its acceptance internationally.

The Council also agreed to amend the provision in the Commission's proposal relating to abnormally low tenders. That required contracting authorities to ask for written explanations in such cases, but it was putting an unnecessary burden on contracting authorities in cases where they were prepared to accept the offer. The changes now made will limit the obligation to ask for explanations, and take them into account, to cases where the contracting authorities consider rejecting such an offer.

Another area in which improvements have been made is the acceptance of variants. The proposal now says simply that where the criterion for the award of the contract is that of the most economically advantageous tender, contracting authorities may take account of variants that meet their minimum specifications, which they must state in the contract documents together with any specific requirements for their presentation. A proposal to limit the rejection of variants now says only that rejection is not allowed on the sole ground that a variant has been drawn up by reference to European standards, or the like, instead of those to which the contracting authority had referred.

Two provisions that pose difficulties for us result from amendments that the European Parliament proposed to the common position and which the Commission has taken into its re-examined proposal. The first would allow contracting authorities to impose conditions for participation aimed at assisting the fight against long-term unemployment or for the employment of young people. But that could be only in the context of programmes agreed by the Commission.

The background is that last September, in deciding on a case brought before it by a court in the Netherlands, the European Court of Justice pronounced on the position under the existing directive. It found that the directive allowed member states to make their own rules on public procurement provided they were compatible with Community rules and that, subject to national rules, contracting authorities were free under the directive to impose conditions relating to the use of the long-term unemployed—provided there was not discrimination, direct or indirect, against firms from other member states. The nature of the condition would have to be mentioned in the tender notice published in the official journal.

What is now proposed would limit the freedom of member states to forbid conditions of the kind that it mentions. Conversely, the provision might prevent the use by contracting authorities of other conditions for participating in a contract procedure. The proposal also changes the balance of responsibilities by letting the Commission rather than national courts decide in the first instance whether a condition is discriminatory. Finally, the meaning of the expressions "operational programmes" and "competent authorities" is unclear. For these reasons, that provision is not one that we could support.

The second provision that causes us difficulty is a requirement on contracting authorities to state where information can be obtained on the employment conditions applicable where the work is to be carried out, and to require tenderers to state that those conditions have been taken into account in their offers. That provision involves just the kind of administrative burden we want to avoid. Clearly it is important that contractors should make their offers with the necessary knowledge of the environment in which they would be working. But that is best done by the firms themselves making inquiries or having inquiries made for them. Making it a requirement for contracting authorities to state the source or sources of the relevant information assumes knowledge that they may not have, particularly of works to be carried out elsewhere. If they make errors of omission, it could lead to confusion over liability. The solution that the Council found in its common position was to say that contracting authorities may indicate the sources of the relevant information. If the provision is mandatory, there may need to be safeguards for contracting authorities.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can my right hon. Friend say what will happen procedurally? He says that the European Parliament proposed two changes to the common position that Britain does not like. What will happen next? Will there be a majority vote, or must there be unanimity? If there is not unanimity, will we have to scrap those proposals? My right hon. Friend is right in the thick of it, and it would help the House to understand those matters if he will explain what will happen to those two unacceptable amendments.

Mr. Brooke: I shall answer my hon. Friend's question, but I want to make absolutely certain that my reply is correct. I shall respond to his point later.

Before moving on from the works directive, it may be helpful to refer to the position on negotiations with those who submit tenders. The Council agreed with the Commission to publish a statement on the extent to which negotiations can take place where there is competition based on open or restricted procedures. Negotiations will be ruled out where they are likely to distort competition, but it will be recognised that discussions can properly take place for the purpose of clarifying or supplementing the contents of tenders or the requirements of contracting authorities. We regard it as important to ensure that contracting authorities can hold such discussions in their pursuit of value for money.

The proposal for the directive to improve compliance does not relate only to the works directive, but applies to the supplies directives as well. Getting better compliance has long been the Commission's objective, and member states have shared it. Most, of course, are fairly certain that there are not undue problems in their own countries. They say that what they need is to be sure that others are following the rules. The United Kingdom can justifiably claim that it has a good record in observing the rules. That is not the point. For suppliers and contractors to have the necessary confidence to go out and get the business, they need to be satisfied that their bids will be properly and fairly considered.

That is what the proposal on compliance is intended to ensure. At its heart is a set of requirements that member states must ensure are fulfilled in each country. They come down to saying that procedures shall exist to enable firms who may feel aggrieved to obtain reviews through judicial or other procedures. Putting it that way enables the Commission to cope with different practices in the various member states. But it is worth pointing out that the Commission is showing itself insistent on ensuring that, whatever the system, there is a completely independent element within it.

The Treasury describe in the latest supplementary explanatory memorandum how discussions in the Council machinery are pointing towards significant changes in the proposal. I regret that it was not possible to provide the

[Mr. Brooke]

memorandum until a day or so ago. However, it shows the very latest position in the Council, and I shall say more in a moment about how we see the position on one or two points.

Rather than take up time by examining the way that the proposal developed at every stage, let me describe some key points in the version now being discussed. The latest form of the proposal still provides for damages to be available to persons harmed by an infringement, but leaves the decision on how damages are to be calculated in the hands of member states. We believe that that is right. We do not believe that, as the Commission originally proposed, it should be possible to claim compensation in respect of forgone profits or lost opportunities.

The proposal in the form that the Council is now discussing no longer gives the Commission a power to intervene as of right in court proceedings, as the Commission originally intended. Instead it provides that member states may require that the leave of the court is obtained before the Commission presents its observations. Courts in the United Kingdom can, if they wish, already invite the Commission to do that. Normally, however, they would expect to refer a question of European law to the European Court of Justice. We need to consider whether a provision pointing them in another direction is justified.

The proposal in its latest form does not give the Commission the power to suspend award procedures. Instead it includes a procedure whereby the Commission may notify a member state if it considers there is to be a clear and manifest infringement. It is recognised that the member state, in replying, may refer to the fact that review proceedings are under way. I know that some interests —such as the Confederation of British Industry—would prefer the main feature of the enforcement mechanism to be a system of audit. That idea is attractive, and I believe that it may have an important place in securing more open procurement in the excluded sectors, where directives on procurement have still to be adopted. However, I do not believe that we can hope to convince the Commission or other member states that audit can take the place of the kind of rules that we are now discussing in relation to Government Departments and local authorities. For one thing, we cannot, at least at this stage, expect to obtain the more flexible régime for the award of contracts that we hope to get for the excluded sectors, and which provides the main rationale for adopting the audit approach.

The CBI itself wants to establish what it calls a central complaints procedure that may include more than letting firms seek notification by the Commission in the way I have described. I shall be interested in how the CBI develops its thinking, but I note the difficulties that may arise in preserving the proper bounds of responsibility of the Commission and of member states. The CBI says that actions in the courts should always take place after contracts are awarded. I ought to point out that the courts in this country can already step in before that point.

I know that hon. Members may have a number of other concerns with both the compliance proposal and that on works. I should like to say a word or two more about the Government's view. The Government share to the full the wish to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. I believe that the changes made to the Commission's original proposal to amend the directive on works go a long way towards getting rid of the rigidity that makes life difficult for purchasers. Many of the points that are raised apply, in fact, more to supplies than to works. Then there are those who would prefer the directive to impose obligations of a social kind on contracting authorities. The Government believe that it is not appropriate for a procurement directive to do this, and that view is shared by a number of other members states.

Hon. Members may ask whether the works directive, even when it is amended, is likely in practice to increase competition. So far, the number of contracts awarded to non-national firms has been small. The number will grow, but we should not expect figures like this to tell the whole story. Increasingly, contractors are looking at other ways of breaking into new markets, such as joint ventures and the acquisition of existing businesses. Such moves will be made easier by the provisions in the new directive that are designed to give greater openness to the process of awarding contracts.

Some of those who have commented to us on the Commission's proposal on compliance have been concerned about the risk of expensive litigation. The point is a fair one, though, of course, it arises because of the wish, which we share, to give suppliers an opportunity to take up complaints. The courts will be able, within the terms of the Commission's proposals, to deal with frivolous actions. There may be a case for making this explicit, while avoiding unnecessary harmonisation of national provisions. In relation to the excluded sectors, the Commission has itself made it clear that it recognises the extent to which commercial enterprises may be vulnerable to litigation, and will take that into acount in making its separate proposals on the enforcement of any rules on procurement that may be adopted for those sectors.

As for the present proposals on compliance and works, the Government believe that they include features that it is practicable to include in new directives soon and that it is worthwhile to try to do so. Subject to seeking the changes I have mentioned in the proposal for works, the Government propose to join other member states in agreeing to adopt the directive. As for compliance, we believe that there are important benefits to be obtained, and we therefore propose to work with the Commission and other member states to produce a system that puts responsibility on member states, where it belongs.

7.23 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I beg to move, as an amendment to the motion, at the end to add:

'and would welcome the provision of a speedy and effective system of arbitration in cases where contractors consider that they are not being afforded fair and equal rights to tender and to secure public purchasing contracts.'.

I am afraid that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who is one of the most conscientious Members of the House, was expecting the motion to be debated later in the evening. I am therefore moving the amendment on his behalf. I apologise for the fact that my hon. Friend is not here, but I remind the House that he is one of the most conscientious Members in his attendance at Euro-debates.

I hope that the Government will accept this brief and non-controversial amendment. We are all of the view—whether one is critical or uncritical of the EEC—that anything that can bring about free trade in Europe should

be supported 100 per cent. If the 1992 programme will achieve that aim, we shall all be very happy, particularly if it does not bring protectionism with it.

What worries me, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and others, is that there have been many assurances of this nature in the past. However, for all kinds of reasons—certainly not through the Government's fault—nothing has happened. Hon. Members will recall that after the Prime Minister returned from Europe she told us that she had received a firm assurance that the EEC would impose spending controls. Unfortunately, they did not work because the Commission was still able to use crazy accountancy devices. The Court of Auditors report which has just been published shows that, while budget expenditure was expected to increase by 3 per cent., it actually increased by 25 per cent. We expected good things to happen. Sadly, they did not happen—not because of the Government but because we did not check everything out.

We have also encountered problems with 1992 itself. The insurance industry, in which I am involved, expected exciting things to happen in connection with free trade, but sadly the directive illustrates that free competition will be very limited. We have received assurances in the past about fraud. I know that the Minister is taking a personal interest in the activities of the Mafia. He will have read the recent statement by the leader of the magistrates in Sicily that he fears that the directive might lead to an extension of the nasty activities of the Mafia. The Mafia used to be in charge of crime, prostitution and the drugs industry in Sicily, but we understand that it is now engaging in other activities because money from the common agricultural policy is much easier to come by. Whether or not that is true, fraud is a problem.

We are worried that all these excellent measures will add to the costs of contracting authorities, councils and public bodies. They will have to provide a great deal of information and go through all kinds of procedures which may not work. That is why it would help enormously if the Government felt able to provide an easy arbitration procedure. If a British contractor felt that he was being discriminated against unreasonably, or that he was being treated shamefully by a public authority, he would then be able to do something about it.

The Minister probably knows about the example that I intend to mention. If he does not, he should speak to his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary or to the Secretary of State for Transport. Southend wanted to be able to fly a plane to Ostend and then to run a bus from Ostend to Frankfurt. We were told that we could do so; European Community legislation on the subject was clear; we could go ahead right away. The Minister knows what, sadly, happened. We had to appeal to the Foreign Secretary who went to see Mr. Genscher, the Foreign Affairs Minister in Germany. They talked about it, but nothing happened. Then the Foreign Secretary approached the splendid Minister of State at the Foreign Office. She tried terribly hard. She took infraction proceedings—which I do not understand, but other hon. Members will. Unfortunately, nothing happened.

With some of my friends on Southend council I then flew to Bonn. There, together with the splendid British ambassador, we went to see someone who, we were told, was the head of the German transport department. We had a frosty meeting with him, We found that he was not the head of the department; he said that he was in charge of the Berlin airlift. When I told him that the Berlin airlift ended over 30 years ago he told me that there were residual problems.

The point is that, although the law was clear, we battled on for four years and got nowhere. After the four years were up and when it seemed that something was going to be done, we found, sadly, that the poor firm had gone bust.

I know that the Minister is battling hard for Britain, as he always does. He is fighting for jobs and for the good of Britain in the Community. However, it will not help Britain if lots of extra bureaucratic controls are imposed. Something must be done about it.

I am worried about the proposal that all these matters should be referred to the Commission. The Minister must be aware of what happens when matters are referred to the Commission. There are all kinds of discussions, meetings and procedures. If my right hon. Friend is in any doubt about that, he should talk to the boss of Amstrad, Mr. Alan Sugar. He will tell my right hon. Friend what he thinks about the Commission.

All we want is easy access to easy arbitration. We do not need a great court system, but we should have a small number of highly qualified arbiters. They should not have the right to change a contract, as that is extremely difficult, but they should have the right to impose penalties and perhaps to award compensation. It is crucial that there should be an easy method of access to prevent organisations such as the German Länder, which have behaved rather strangely in the past, and to stop some of the sillier local authorities—perhaps some of the British local authorities—from showing discrimination where there should be freedom. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will appreciate that the amendment does not bind the Government in any way. It does not tell them to stand on their head and to throw out the regulations.

We all agree that free trade and the extension of freedom to purchase would be good, but there is not much point in putting extra burdens on industry unless we discover that the system works. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will accept the amendment and start a new process of good will and co-operation in the House of Commons so that we can all fight together for British industry and British jobs.

7.30 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I begin by saying that the Opposition welcome the amendment and we hope that the Government will accept it.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) uses the first person plural to describe the Labour party. Will he tell us why only one Labour Member is present for a debate on a very important issue?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not relevant. As this is a timed debate, we should make some progress.

Mr. Holland: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) cannot count. Two Labour Members are present on a day when the Conservative ranks appear rather thin, and we do not have to stretch our imagination to discover why.

The amendment welcomes the provision of a speedy and effective system of arbitration when contractors consider that they are not being afforded fair and equal rights. I should have thought that the Government would

[Mr. Holland]

accept the amendment. Who could be against speedy and effective systems—the Government have told us that they do not favour bureaucracy—and who could be against fair and equal rights? The amendment is limited in that it is not highly specific in the manner in which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) demanded that legislation concerning the Community should be. We shall not push the matter to a vote, but we certainly support the amendment and we urge the Government to accept it.

We are very glad to know, or to see in the press, that the House may soon adopt new methods for Community legislation. It would have been interesting had the Minister been able to refer to the reports in the press and to give us some indication of the way in which such legislation will be considered. Perhaps he will do that when he replies to the debate. If it is the case that the House will receive earlier information on proposals to the Council of Ministers, it will be possible, through discussion and debate, as is classic in the House, to influence the legislation through amendments. Instead of getting legislation which is already six months out of date, the House might have the chance to consider it in advance.

Yet again, we are having a short debate on the legislation, although its provisions are wide-ranging. There are half a dozen articles and various sub-clauses covering more than two and a half pages of text, and that is on tendering alone. They do not concern the other provisions which have been proposed by amendments in the European Parliament and which have aroused considerable concern elsewhere.

The proposals include the issue of abnormally low tenders and how to cope with them, and the advertising thresholds for small and medium-sized firms. They seek to address the abuse of a dominant position in the internal market in tendering by big business. Classically, larger firms can put in lower prices on a contract and squeeze out small and medium-sized firms. The raising of the threshold, which we regard as perfectly reasonable, will make it possible for small and medium-sized firms to get contracts without the bureaucracy which would otherwise be involved in awarding those contracts. That provision also applies to the information on sub-contracts, and we welcome it. In other words, it should be open to small and medium-size firms in practice to bid for sub-contracts on large projects.

However, we are disappointed by the Government's response to some of the proposals by the European Parliament about special provisions on long-term unemployment and the employment of young people. It also is striking that the Minister did not refer to special provisions for contracts in assisted regions of the Community. It is perfectly clear why the Government are opposed to that. They say that they are concerned about changing the balance of priorities in the Community towards the Commission.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Southend, East asked the Minister about the implications for the Single European Act, for majority voting and for article 100A. The Minister said that he was not prepared to reply to that, but an answer is necessary and it has to be yes or no. Either it is consistent with the Single European Act or it is not.

The Government are causing difficulties, or claim difficulties in other respects, when the contractors must reveal sources of relevant information when the contracts are submittee. Why do the Government have such difficulty with contracts which are designed to reduce long-term unemployment or to assist employment for young people? The Minister's speech, and certain background information contains arguments claiming that the Commission has not published the costs which various procedures would entail.

Perhaps the Paymaster General can answer the following question: what cost implications of awarding such contracts on a regional basis have the Government estimated? What is the cost to the Community of awarding contracts to local firms in a region of high unemployment, whether that is an inner-city area, an industrial region in decline? What costs are involved in doing that? In many cases the costs may be marginal in direct terms, but in indirect and social terms they can contribute to the regeneration of inner-city areas or industrial regions in decline, or stem the further decline of such regions. They can also bring hope through work and training, especially to the young who otherwise increasingly are persuaded that they have no hope of training or of getting a job.

We find it deplorable that the Government cannot support those objectives. Also, the Paymaster General's statement to the House about business and competition were, frankly, amazing. When he talked about competition, I thought that we would get at least a line or two of rhetoric about the thrusting entrepreneurs of the Government's mythology. Not at all. According to the notes I took at the time, the Minister said that there will be an increase in joint ventures and the acquisition of existing business. Is that what the Government have in mind as a result of that provision?

If it is, it means an increase of concentration and centralisation in the construction industry in the Community as a whole. Without provision for giving exceptional treatment to contracts either in the assisted regions or on social grounds, that is precisely the consequence of the measures before us. It has been seen in the past in other industries. In the United Kingdom there has been concentration in the construction industry. It is especially easy for big firms to achieve, as it is characteristic of the construction industry that firms themselves do not own all the equipment they use, but hire it on a sub-contract basis. It will, therefore, be open to the bigger firms in construction to bid for the bigger projects throughout the Community in a manner that will not be possible for small and medium firms whose own construction activities are in particular localities—whether southern Italy, Catalonia, Liverpool, the north-east, or Scotland.

The consequence of the provision is related to a philosophy of 1992 and the internal market that comes across clearly from what the Minister said—that the Government support the market dimension of the proposal, but not the social and regional dimensions although they are crucial to offset the concentration of the construction business into fewer hands in the Community. In that sense, the Government show themselves, regrettably, more concerned for the private interest than the public interest, more concerned for profit than for people and more concerned for big business than small business.

This approach is typical of the Government's general approach in the Community towards the 1992 proposals. The provisions should include the amendments concerning derogation for contracts in regions of high unemployment. They should be supported rather than opposed. Also, in practice, there is a strong case for such public contracts to ensure that equal opportunities are respected by the contracting firm, and that the firms awarded the contract should expect to have regard to the environment and sound environmental practices.

We have heard a great deal from the Government about the environment. Why did the Minister say nothing about that? Many of the schemes on which bids will be made in the Community will have environmental consequences and many of them will be major infrastructural schemes. Where is the provision to ensure that there is concern for protection of the environment in those schemes? Where is there any concern to ensure that contractors on a project such as the Channel tunnel, who may disturb the environment in either an urban or rural area for several years, will have any obligation to those living adjacent to the project whose lives may be disturbed? In those respects, the Government speak with one voice at an environmental conference in London and with another voice when there is a low attendance at a debate in this Chamber on Community legislation.

There is a consistent trend behind the Government's approach. It is consistent with the interview given a few days ago to *Le Monde* by the Chancellor of the Exchequer who, after all, has responsibility for this legislation, as is made explicit in the background memorandum. The interview concerned the 1992 proposals and the proposals for economic and monetary union in the Community. The Chancellor said that the Government supported the internal market proposals, but rejected the view of the Prime Minister of France that an internal market without a social dimension would be simply a jungle, or a house open to the winds. The Government will increasingly have to address the issues of the social dimension, whether they like it or not. There will be an increasing expectation that they should be concerned with areas of high unemployment, with the social implications of legislation and with matters of the environment.

The issue was put well in an article in today's *Financial Times* by Joe Rogaly, who writes:

"The mistaken belief that Britain has undergone a true revolution . . . lies behind the Bruges view that European integration can be allowed to go far enough to meet the trading needs of the partners—but certainly never so far that what has been achieved in Britain since 1979 will be overturned by corporatists and social democrats ruling from Brussels after 1992. Like so many other difficult equations of the 1980s, this one is all solved with mirrors. The reality is that Britain has little option but to move, ratchet by ratchet, with the rest of the EC; the bombast, which is based upon a sense of continued ideological superiority, is entirely in the opposite direction."

As can be seen in this legislation, in rejecting the social dimension and preferential programmes for the regions, the Government and the Prime Minister have shown that they are out of date, out of touch and out of line with the rest of the Community.

On a personal note, the Prime Minister said that she had not spent 10 years in Britain rolling back the frontiers of the welfare state to see them now roll forward in Europe. It may be known to the House that I shall be accepting a post in the Community and I shall be working there with others in Europe to help ensure that they do precisely that. The social, regional and industrial policies that Europe needs can be formulated and mobilised, and widely supported by other Governments in the Community.

7.47 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The Opposition spokesman concluded his remarks on a rather interesting and dramatic note. It is interesting to reflect briefly that, only a few years ago, he was a strong anti-Marketeer.

Mr. Holland: Although it may be a footnote of history, I must point out that my first employment on leaving university was to be an economic adviser to the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, on European Community affairs. I advised him then that the Community was neither a sabre-toothed tiger about to shred the nation state nor a springboard for federalism. I not only advised him to apply to join, but assisted indirectly with some of the negotiations. It would have been better if we had had successful negotiations in the 1960s on better terms than it was later possible to achieve.

Mr. Dykes: That was a long response. Coming back to 1970 and afterwards, when we did broadcasts together in French, the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) was not keen on Europe. It is interesting to see the change in the Labour party's attitude. I hope that that will not be mirrored in my own party in terms of adverse changes of attitude to the European Community. I am sure that it will not be. The Conservative party remains genuinely, fundamentally and profoundly a quintessentially European party. I welcome the conversion of the Labour party's official spokesman and Labour Members and their developing enthusiasm for Europe—even if it is for rather negative reasons. It is part of a general realisation that the Community is here to stay, is a good thing, that membership of it is an outstanding historic development and a good thing for this country—

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Rubbish.

Mr. Dykes: The country is settling down at long last to the facts and realities of Community membership, like other member states, and the country and its official representatives are gradually and with increasing self-confidence getting used to working with foreigners. They are realising—it is a monumental surprise to some —that, like us, foreigners are human beings with needs, hopes, aspirations, desires and requirements, and that they are people we can trust and on whom we can rely in a developing Community.

Many people in the other member states will be saddened if they think that this country is at variance with their views or at odds with them on too many things. However, I believe that the press is exaggerating on that and that that will not happen because even in a House of Commons so overloaded with work and too much legislation, common sense will break through. However, it would be a pity if that manifested itself in a number of limited areas because the other member states welcome the intellectual and practical contributions that this country can make. One always gets that impression when visiting them and talking to their people.

Several agreeable things are happening right now about these directives. I pay a sincere tribute to the way in which my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has handled

[Mr. Dykes]

them. As the only member of the Select Committee on European Legislation present in the Chamber, I pay a particular tribute to my right hon. Friend for the way in which, in difficult circumstances and with a short timetable, he kept us informed of the changes at the last stages, including his rather dramatically written letter of 2 May, which was appreciated by members of the Select Committee.

Another agreeable manifestation is that this debate is taking place—good Lord, I don't believe it, no it can't be —at 7 o'clock in the evening. It would be nice if it could last for longer than an hour and a half when we are debating such a complex area.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dykes: I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) expressing his agreement on that. Whatever their original view about the Community, its membership, the history thereof and the future, more and more hon. Members want the House of Commons to get to grips with more effective scrutiny. Indeed, there has been press speculation about that.

I am a most enthusiastic European. I am the kind of sensible person who carries ecu travel cheques on the continent. Although they are accepted in only a limited number of outlets at the moment, the future is long term and we should wait to see what happens with those developments. European money would be practical for all member states in due course and that, too, is a long-term development.

I have always been strongly in favour of effective and profound scrutiny. It is not right for the press or hon. Members to be pessimistic about that and to say, "We are swamped and overwhelmed," or "We cannot handle it." With the mechanisms that we employ and augment from now on and depending on the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure on the ideas that are to be promoted soon, both through the usual channels and publicly by the Leader of the House—and perhaps by the Labour party and the other Opposition parties also—the House of Commons and the House of Lords, in so far as it is involved, can engage themselves properly, without great difficulty, in those aspects of scrutiny and do the job properly. That will not be done by whingeing and moaning about every single item that emanates from Brussels and saying, "Here is yet another manifestation of bureaucracy," because that is usually a totally inaccurate and emotional comment. Instead we should concentrate on the important things when we are dealing with the legislative instruments that come before us.

I hope that we can get the mechanism right and have it at the appropriate last stage, rather than considering these legislative instruments like the several stages of a Bill in our own domestic legislation and, therefore, dealing with them repetitively. We should go back to the great policy areas of the development of European policy and consider the European Council as the supreme policy body, and not regard its policies simply as issues for the Council of Ministers to vote on, either by majority of unanimity, depending on the Commission's suggestions.

Although the Paymaster General will say that this is not his province—I hope that he has the chance to pay some heed to this issue, although I appreciate that he is making notes on all sorts of complex points relating to the directives—I stress that, to do what I have suggested, we need our European Supply days. We need all-day debates. We should send more provisions into Committee, if they are minor. We need debates like this, in the afternoon or the early evening, not late at night. We need greater attendance at such debates and I hope that that will come in the future. We should not necessarily give these matters more severe treatment just because they come from Europe than we give our own secondary legislation. It is absurd to think of a deserted House dealing with domestic secondary legislation and saying "That does not matter —it is not important," because, of course, it is important. However, European matters are different and we are still getting used to the substance and the chemistry of them, which is always a complex task.

I would go into these documents in detail if there were more time. Again, it is a pity that an hour and a half is the maximum time for a debate on such complex areas. These provisions are an extremely good example of where the Community is getting it right and where the British Government and, I hope, the British Parliament, are getting it right in terms of our responses to these matters. I agree very much with what my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said about the documents.

Despite being an enthusiastic European, I hesitate about some of the amendments proposed by the European Parliament. As we know, they are not enforceable by that institution; they are only suggestions which may or may not be incorporated. I am glad that there is now a forcible Commission approach to achieving a single market for public supply contracts, works contracts and equipment contracts. There will be many bumpy moments on that stony, rocky and difficult path. Incidentally, I hope that when my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, is rightly pleading for British companies to get contracts in Italy or Germany in the future, he will plead hard for a German or an Italian company to get a contract in Britain on the same basis——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Or an Ameriean company.

Mr. Dykes: Yes, and others, wherever they may be, but we are thinking at the moment of the European Community and its component member states.

We need a completely fair-minded and balanced approach to these matters, and not double standards that depend on an emotional nationalism, which is the obvious temptation. I have noticed that some of my hon. Friends, who are gung-ho free-market people in terms of domestic policies, always become massively interventionist if their own constituencies are affected by free market manifestations or by the closing of a business. They then become superb interventionists of the most ferocious blood-tooth kind when defending—*[Interruption.]* I shall not allow my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East to tempt me, because I would be getting out of order. If my hon. Friend will be patient, I shall come back to him on another occasion. Perhaps I shall even write to him, if that is not something that only Ministers can say. Perhaps Back-Bench Members can say, "I will write to my hon. Friend." That may be the proper way to do it, but I shall have a conversation about this with my hon. Friend in due course.

Sometimes unwittingly, but usually consciously and cynically, people can have double standards. If we are to

accept an open market in public supply contracts, it must be genuinely open. It must be a market in which we accept the rough with the smooth and where foreign companies can come here without our being surprised and disconcerted by the efficiency of their approach. Perhaps in future, contracts will start to be expressed in ecu. Public authorities in different member states could ask for the contracts to be expressed in ecu. Gradually, if ecu prices are posted, both in the manufacturing and contracting sectors and in the retail sector, in hotels, restaurants and shops, perhaps we shall gradually see a development, at the margin, of that European currency, alongside the currencies of all the member states.

Turning to the documents, at long last the Community is on the march. This has been a complex area with immensely complicated legal implications to be worked out by lawyers in all the member states. I agree with the general approach taken by my right hon. Friend and the Government on this matter and that we should keep this issue unbureaucratic, open and flexible so that we can ensure that the provisions are based on genuine commercial criteria from the contracting parties and the sub-contractors.

Obviously, much complicated negotiating remains to be done by representatives of Her Majesty's Government on these matters, especially in respect of the second directive to which my right hon. Friend referred. I wish my right hon. Friend well on that. We are now seeing the growing maturity of the House of Commons, which at long last is beginning to understand that Jacques Delors was misquoted when he referred to his famous 80 per cent. If one re-reads his words, one will find that he said that only the Bundestag and the House of Commons were doing anything like a little bit, or perhaps a bit more than a little bit, of effective, but none the less inevitably circumscribed, scrutiny.

He also said that if the Parliaments of the other member states did not adopt similar mechanisms, the parliamentarians of those member states and the populations represented by them would wake up with a rude shock and a sense of surprise and deception later when they realised that more and more decisions were being made collectively on behalf of the member states by the Council of Ministers, voting increasingly on a majority. What a terrible and frightening thought is a majority voting system, which used to be called by the old-fashioned word "democracy". I do not see why that should not work just as well in Europe as it does on a national scale.

7.59 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): This is a joyous occasion not only because we are dealing with a European matter at a relatively appropriate time of the evening but also because, whilst there is not unanimity, there is a fair amount of common ground in the Chamber. I am surprised that I find myself in considerable agreement with what the hon. Gentleman the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said, since his European enthusiasm has been shared over many years by members of my party. He spoke about the parting comments of the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). He will go to his new employment with the best wishes of all hon. Members.

One of the most surprising aspects is that I found myself having much in common on a European matter with the hon. Gentleman the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). He said that, if the creation of a single market improves free trade, it is to be welcomed. We share that view. I also shared his anxiety that, if there are some concealed bumps in what is otherwise meant to be a level playing field, they, too, should be rooted out.

I recall raising in the House almost a year ago, in a debate on shipbuilding, a contract that a local authority in my own constituency was placing for the building of some ferries. It received a very attractive tender from a company in another Community country that was believed to have been subsidised many times over, to a far greater extent than any subsidy allowed to a British company tendering for the same contract. We look forward to companies of different countries being able to tender for public contracts on equal terms.

I also share the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Southend, East on the question of implementation of these proposals. The motion says that the Government intend that the principal responsibility for ensuring compliance will rest with the member states. In this country, we have a good record of complying with directives, although we might argue about their terms before they are ultimately passed. However, I suppose we are concerned about compliance with the directives by other member states. It is probably not profitable to point accusing fingers, but we must be confident that other member states will comply properly.

I realise that we have been presented in this debate with very technical papers, and I apologise to the Paymaster General if I did not follow all that he said. I was not sure that he said much about the attitude of other member states to compliance. I would welcome anything he might say on that in reply.

I hope that in 1992 the single market created will not just be for the benefit of big business. If the single market is to achieve its purpose, small businesses must share in the benefits. The Paymaster General referred to major contracts for smaller businesses being considered. That would allow small businesses to tender for sub-contracts, a move that is welcome. Moreover, the raising of the threshold will allow many small businesses to tender for and win more contracts.

I wonder whether more can be done to bring to the notice of smaller businesses the types of contract being put out for tender in many different parts of the Community. In my own constituency, many small businesses would not be aware of possible opportunities. In these days of information technology, perhaps some central agency could disseminate information about the Community. Very often, a lot of information is fed in, but perhaps we could look at improving the dissemination of information from the centre. If that helped to draw attention to business opportunities, it would be most welcome.

The raising of the minimum level for contracts is also welcome, as it will relieve a burden felt by many local authorities. To tender and advertise on a wide scale imposes an administrative burden, as well as advertising costs. The Minister said that, under the new provisions, companies would have more time to respond to advertisements. In circumstances in which a contract has to be placed very quickly, what are the requirements? If something has to be done the day after tomorrow, one cannot expect advertising on a wide scale. However, when the time scale is 10 days or 20 days, it is a greyer area. In other cases, perhaps as a result of flooding or some other

[Mr. James Wallace]

natural disaster, an immediate response is required by a public authority. In such cases, advertising fully throughout the Community is inappropriate.

I refer, finally, to the delegations proposed by the European Parliament. As I understood them, they were for contracts that had regard to programmes agreed by the Commission in connection with the long-term unemployed and young people. I cannot see anything particularly mandatory in those provisions. However, perhaps the Government could have a second look at the matter.

While it is necessary that the benefits of 1992 be shared by big and small businesses, it is most important that benefits be shared by all areas of the Community. The honeypot triangle of Paris, Frankfurt and London should not receive all the benefits. Many remoter areas also wish to share the benefits that will flow from the free market of 1992. Community programmes are involved. There need not necessarily be any question of discrimination between competing companies of different nationalities. If, for example, the contract related to the number of young people likely to be engaged in a project, I have no doubt that an appropriate tender could be submitted by a French, Italian, or British company. There is nothing inherently discriminatory that would militate against such a situation.

Mr. Dykes: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it would be better to establish those conditions on a non-discriminatory basis in terms of the promulgation of the contract for which the tender was sought by the public agency concerned in whatever country, with the advertisements thereof in the press and elsewhere?

Mr. Wallace: I believe it would be better if those who were competing for the tender were well aware of what was involved. I would be grateful for anything the Paymaster General can say about this matter in reply.

It is gratifying that we are making progress in this area. Some worthwhile changes have been made. I hope that the Paymaster General will respond positively to the reasonable and practical suggestions of the hon. Member for Southend, East. What was suggested would import into the matter a certain degree of independent compliance. Certainly, if the matter is pressed to a vote, I will be disposed to support the amendment.

8.8 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): It is easy to express the pious hope that there will be free competition and many opportunities for companies in any country in the Community to seek to offer their services elsewhere. It is not particularly difficult to draw up directives or legislation which state those objectives and express the hopes and ideals which are unanimously supported in the House. However, it is particularly difficult to ensure compliance with those objectives when they are expressed.

I will not digress from the subject in hand, but surely it is the experience of Her Majesty's Government that it is difficult to guarantee real competition in tendering for contracts put out by public bodies, even in one country. It is difficult to avoid the feeling that there are elements of discrimination. There are elements of political favouritism. If it is difficult in one country, it will be even more difficult in Europe. Nevertheless, I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about the approach which the Community is taking and which Her Majesty's Government are supporting. The directives on procurement and compliance are a move in the right direction. No one will object to that.

Every speaker in the debate has referred to 1992 and the single European market. The directives are not specifically related to 1992. Regardless of 1992, they are essential, but they will be more important after that date, because we may expect a growth in the number of large projects which spread across national frontiers. River or tunnel projects, for example, will involve more than one Government, perhaps several municipal authorities, and other statutory bodies in different countries, all of whom will have an interest in one contract.

I appreciated the comments of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). He referred to the construction industry. The directives are not specifically related to 1992, nor are they limited to the construction industry. Public works projects of the scale envisaged in the directives will involve a wide range of industries. Therefore, they are of far greater importance than digging holes and laying bricks and mortar.

I fear that political complications will arise. They will not only be that companies based in the United Kingdom may find it difficult to obtain compliance on the mainland of Europe, although that is what we tend to think when we discuss such matters. I agree that the directives apply to mainland companies seeking opportunities in public works contracts in this country. That is to be welcomed. However, it is an important reminder for companies in this country which are worried about their opportunities to obtain overseas contracts that they must compete harder in future because compliance with the directives documents will mean that their overseas competitors will have better opportunities.

There is no doubt that disputes will arise from time to time between companies seeking to tender and authorities putting out contracts for tender. That is why I shall say a word in favour of harmonisation—a word which often raises people's hackles. This is a case in which harmonisation can only do good. The closer the contracts drawn up between countries coincide, the better. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said that tendering documents will be drawn up according to the regulations in member countries, as long as they are acceptable under the broad control and rules of the Commission. That still leaves a good deal of room for misunderstanding and variation.

I should like to see standard forms of tender and contract. In response to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), I should like to see standard forms of advertising. It should be recognised that project advertisements should not be geared so that they give different results in different countries. Journals and newspapers do not always have the same readership. The closer we can get to standard forms of tender, contract, and advertising the better.

It will be important to make it clear in advance to small companies that they should look for contracts not only in this country but in Portugal, Greece and places where they might not normally look. Their attention should be drawn to where they will find contracts. The associations to which

many small companies belong have a responsibility to provide a service to their members to tell them where they should look for opportunities.

I commend the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). If disputes arise, we will be able to try to deal with them relatively cheaply. We will need a quick system so as not to get bogged down in legal systems which could be complicated because they operate in more than one country. An arbitration system could be the solution to that problem: I hope that the Paymaster General will consider that proposal. If he does not find the amendment acceptable, I hope that he will look for some quick and easy way whereby a relatively small firm can complain quickly and effectively if it considers that its genuine attempt to provide a service at a competitive cost and of the highest quality is rejected on what appear not to be purely economic grounds. I commend the directive and my hon. Friend's excellent amendment.

8.17 pm

Mr. Brooke: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to another of our admirable debates. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) has announced that he will shortly leave the House, but he has not informed us of precisely when. I hope that there will be many such debates in which he continues to take part before his departure for Fiesole. All hon. Members wish him well there.

The hon. Gentleman and I are former members of Balliol college, Oxford. The departure of any member of that category from the House is a matter of regret for some hon. Members. There was formerly in the college a club called the Hursteron Protaron club, which, once a term, lived its life exactly backwards, and started with a whisky and soda first thing in the morning and ended up with porridge late at night. In this instance, it would be more convenient for the House if I reply to the admirable speeches in their correct order rather than the reverse order.

We will miss the hon. Member for Vauxhall when he eventually leaves us. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and I will regard him in Fiesole as one of our potential informants on developments in Italy within the Community. We look forward to dispatches from those parts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East referred to procedures. The version of the proposal as it now stands is in the supplementary explanatory memorandum. It shows the latest thinking within the Council working party. It is described in articles 1 and 2. I am replying also to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths). Specifically, the review procedures are to be available to suppliers and contractors who claim to be disadvantaged. There will be notification to member states by the Commission if it considers there to be a clear and manifest infringement which could follow complaints from those who felt that they had been disadvantaged. There will be an investigation by the Commission using its own resources.

As to the question of process, the proposal is now to be considered by the Council. It can be amended at any time by the Commission or by the member states acting unanimously. It can be adopted as a whole by qualified majority voting in the Council. We do not yet know which other member states share our concerns about the proposed articles on conditions for participation and information on working conditions, but other member states have been expressing views as we worked through the matters, and a number of changes that have been made flow from alliances that we have formed with other member states.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East moved an amendment on behalf of our hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). I do not wish to fall back on the traditional escape route of Ministers responding to amendments by referring to the wording of the amendment, but if my hon. Friend examines the wording, he will see that there is a touch of "Alice in Wonderland" in the provision about fair and equal rights to secure public purchasing contracts. It is the case in "Alice in Wonderland" that everyone should have prizes but it is a difficult exercise to achieve in a competitive process.

The amendment suggests arbitration as a form of administrative recourse. It would be premature to decide now whether that would be more appropriate than a system based in the courts. My hon. Friend will know of the deliberations of the House of Lords Select Committee on the matter. The proposal, as it is evolving, would allow a judicial system or an administrative system, or both. Existing remedies might suffice. On the other hand, some form of administrative tribunal or arbitration body might have advantages. That was the issue considered by the House of Lords Select Committee in its admirable report last year. It concluded that in the United Kingdom the tenderer should seek remedy in the courts. We all agree that contractors and suppliers should be provided with a speedy and effective remedy where they are harmed by a breach of the rules. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North.

It is essential to the proper operation of the market that companies have equal opportunities to compete for public contracts and that they should have confidence that if they are invited to submit a tender, it will be considered fairly. We will need to consider the means by which such remedies can best be provided. If it proves necessary or desirable to introduce legislation, the House will have an opportunity to debate what we propose. At this stage it would be premature to decide, so I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw his amendment. Having said that, I should be happy to receive representations from my hon. Friends when we get nearer to forming the conclusion on precisely what the remedies should be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East raised a question about costs. I agree about the importance of avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy, as I said in my speech. The process of negotiation has removed excesses in the original proposal, although I acknowledge that some difficult points remain, such as the requirement to specify the source of information on employment conditions. The basic procedures, such as making a clear decision on the requirements of contracting authorities and going to competition, are fully consistent with the principle of getting value for money. For major projects over £3 million it is not unreasonable to expect public bodies to have to go to competition.

If this is the last contribution of the hon. Member for Vauxhall to these debates, it is admirable that he fulfilled his usual tradition of raising the King Charles's head of large corporations. He drew attention again to small businesses, to which I referred earlier. The Commission's approach to disadvantaged regions is to assist small firms

[Mr. Brooke]

by other means. The Commission has spoken of a series of proposals such as an active policy on sub-contracting, but such measures would not be appropriate to a procurement directive. I acknowledge the interest of hon. Members in making sure that these opportunities are available to small business.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall rehearsed arguments of a social nature, as I expected him to do. He will know that the representations received by the Government, to which I also referred, were diametrically opposed to those that he rehearsed in his speech. As to his remarks about environmental consequences and the issue of joint ventures and acquisitions, the directive is designed to ensure transparency of fair competition and the ending of discrimination against non-national contractors. It does not and cannot deal with environmental issues.

The way in which the construction industry reacts to the opportunities that implementation of the directive presents is a matter of commerical judgment. In referring to joint ventures and so on, I was simply advising the House on what appears to be happening so far. It must be remembered that we are discussing multi-million pound contracts and that as a result of the increased transparency smaller firms will have better opportunities to operate as sub-contractors.

As this may be the last occasion on which the hon. Member for Vauxhall and I face each other across the Dispatch Box, I will remark, in a sense outside the debate, that I have been struck by the immense investment of the Japanese in research and development in the building and contracting industry. It is likely that we shall see the Japanese impose on that industry internationally what they have done to shipbuilding. I am not sure that it would not be sensible in those circumstances for European consortia to be put together to resist them.

In a characteristic peroration, the hon. Gentleman spoke of the United Kingdom's occasional isolation. On this issue we are not in a state of isolation. We have secured a number of changes already in the negotiations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) made some kind remarks about my relationship with the Scrutiny Committee. He argued for a genuinely open market. I am grateful to him for what he said.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) raised the question of compliance in other member states. They all accept our objective, but, as he says, it is a complex area. Some major hurdles have been removed by the Commission in indicating its willingness to accept changes, but there are still problems of ensuring consistency with national legal systems. One critical point is that the Commission is determined to make sure that there is a fair playing field. It is deploying more of its resources on that work and has taken a number of member states to the European court of Justice.

The principles of the compliance regime will be set by the Commission, but member states will be responsible for precise procedures. The procedures will be open and probably judicial; they will be closely monitored by the Commission. The advantage of leaving the detail to member states is that it enables account to be taken of particular national legal and administrative traditions and procedures.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland saluted the Government for their achievements in reducing the burden on local authorities. On emergency projects, in the case of an extreme and unforeseen emergency, the contracting authority can take immediate action without going through the normal procedures. He joined the hon. Member for Vauxhall in proceeding to what we regard as a somewhat slippery slope in terms of social conditions in the context of securing value for money. But I like the suggestion of finding a better system to make sure that opportunities are known throughout the Community. I hope that someone will take the entrepreneurial opportunity to achieve that objective, because it seems that such an opportunity would exist.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend respond positively to the idea of contracts being gradually and increasingly in ecus as well as in national currencies?

Mr. Brooke: The British Government in their separate actions have shown an enthusiasm for such ecu transactions and have regarded them as a much more sensible and practical way forward.

It was a delight to have the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North. Those of us who are the cognoscenti and the aficionados of these remarkable debates tend to become a somewhat exclusive band of brethren. It is always extremely agreeable to be joined by someone new. I will look seriously at the standardisation of contracts, because of the economic advantage that will derive from them.

I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East to consider——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to the order [28 April].*

Amendment negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7496/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 24th October 1988 and 5909/89 relating to public works contracts and 10497/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 2nd May 1989 relating to compliance with Community rules on procedures for the award of public supply and public works contracts; endorses the view that revisions to Directive 71/305/EEC are necessary to improve public purchasing throughout the Community; welcomes the Government's endeavour to secure a satisfactory outcome in discussions on the proposal on public works contracts in the Council of Ministers; and supports the Government's intention to press for a means of improving compliance with Community rules on procedures for the award of public supply and public works contracts which places appropriate responsibility on Member States.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

BEEF SPECIAL PREMIUM

That the Beef Special Premium (Protection of Payments) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 574), dated 23rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 31st March, be approved.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Question agreed to.

Inner-City Schools (Chess)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Alan Howarth.*]

8.32 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the subject of chess in inner-city schools. About four years ago, in the first—and until this afternoon only—chess match played by a team from the House of Commons against non-Members since I was first elected in 1983, a team of hon. Members played a team selected from schools in the Inner London education authority. Half that team consisted of three brothers aged, from memory, eight, nine and 11, whose family had recently arrived from the Indian sub-continent. Between them they had only a few words of English, but they had been fortunate enough to go to a school which, although exhibiting all the other classic symptoms of inner-city deprivation, clearly had on its staff a chess maniac. The result was that those three boys had quickly learnt to use chess as a means of communication and self-expression. They gave us the surprise of our lives over the chessboard.

There is nothing new in all civilised societies in looking to education as a means of overcoming the poverty and the tendencies towards crime and drugs that are too often found in parts of our cities. When I say "our", I am referring to the cities of humanity, because it is a problem that exists thoughout the known world.

What is perhaps slightly more new is the growing belief that the game of chess can play a significant part in that educative process. It can do so not by attacking the visible difficulties that too often exist in such schools—such as the lack of pupil motivation, the high levels of truancy, the low expectations among pupils, the poor state of repair of many of the buildings and the lack of parental involvement —but rather it can assist teachers in their schools by providing and additional means of motivation, a demonstration of the ability of the mind to overcome obstacles and an encouragement to the use of thought to create order where none previously existed. Chess is not a panacea and it would be foolish to suggest that it could be. What I am suggesting is that it could be a useful tool. It could be one of many means to the end of improving the life chances of pupils in schools where life chances are all too few.

The emphasis on the game of chess, as a way of broadening the intellect, is not new. It was a slogan at the 1924 All-Union Congress of the Soviet Union that

"chess is a powerful weapon of intellectual culture".

Perhaps closer to home, the last keen chess player known to have lived at No. 10 Downing street—although it should be noted that the immediate predecessor of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was a keen amateur chess player—was Mr. Andrew Bonar Law, who, perhaps echoing the traditional view of the British public school, as satirised by Lindsey Anderson in the film "If", said:

"Chess is a cold bath for the mind."

Whether or not it is either of those, it is certainly not a sport. The British Government are right to separate the game of chess from all other games by allocating responsibility for it to my hon. Friend from the Department of Education and Science, who will be replying to the debate, rather than to our colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and Minister with responsibility for sport. Sports such as football or basketball, or any of their many variants, have frequently acted as agencies for social change, lifting individuals out of a deprived environment and allowing them to act as an inspiration to others. Chess alone offers an intellectual route out, and is therefore much more attuned to the traditional values of education.

In raising this subject on the Adjournment, I am not asking my hon. Friend to plough more money into chess, as the Government already have an excellent record of pump priming in that respect and we as a nation have a proud record of sponsorship by individuals and companies in that area. Nor am I inviting my hon. Friend to put additional pressure on schools for the teaching of chess, simply to encourage more chess players. Our educational system clearly already works in that respect, since, as a nation, we rank an undisputed second to the Soviet Union in the chess world.

What I am suggesting to my hon. Friend is that there already exists across many of the developed nations a movement to begin to use the game of chess as an additional tool of the intellect in a deprived educational environment. I should like an assurance from the Minister that his Department will follow the work that is being carried out across the world with interest and commitment and will ensure that the results of that work, in educational terms, are applied as much in this country as elsewhere.

There is a great deal going on in this area and, in accordance with our tradition, we should be leaders. However, we can also afford to be followers.

Today marked an event in the history of the House when a combined team of hon. Members, Members of another place and Officers of the House—a total of 21 —received a thorough and entirely merited drubbing at chess by the reigning world champion, Mr. Gary Kasparov. I hope that today will, in fact, be remembered not just for that event, but for the public start of a process by which the most intellectual of games starts to be used more for the benefit of those in greatest educational need in this country.

8.37 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), who initiated this debate and his colleagues outside the House for their hard work in making it possible.

The House usually listens to those who have personal experience. I should like to report to the Minister that in my four years at Bo'ness academy on the Forth, I ran a lunchtime chess club—I also ran football teams—for any boy or girl who wished to play, and usually 20 to 30 volunteered. I was extremely struck by the fact that not only did they enjoy themselves, but that learning to play chess created confidence among the most unlikely pupils. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is an entry into many other things. It is partly for that reason that we should take it seriously and find out what encouragement can be given by the Department of Education and Science.

I do not complain that there is not a Scottish Minister on the Front Bench, but, as a Scottish Member of Parliament, I know that it will be understood that the same things have been said to the Scottish Education Department, which will bear in mind the long correspondence—in which my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who is present, was

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

also involved—with St. Andrew's house officials regarding help for the Scottish Chess Federation, which has done excellent work.

I emphasise that chess is of benefit not only to potentially clever pupils. I cannot refrain however, from saying that hardly anything challenges a clever pupil so much as—it possibly dates me—going through the games of Alekhline and Capablanca, more latterly the games of Botvinnik and Smyslov or the games of Fischer who appeared after my time at school.

The truth is that, from first hand experience, I believe that chess is valuable and should be encouraged. Encouragement is important because, at school, chess depends on teachers giving up their free time. Now is not the time to discuss the mood of the teachers and their difficulties with the Government. Suffice it to say that any encouragement that can be given to individual teachers to run chess clubs is valuable.

It is important where possible to have chess centres. that is why I greatly welcome the initiative that came to fruition this morning with the re-establishment in the City of London of a chess centre. That is a landmark and we are extremely grateful to the reigning world champion, Gary Kasparov, for taking the trouble to come to Britain to perform that opening. Talking of Gary Kasparov, it would be right to say a big "thank you" to him for coming to play Members of this House, Members of the other place, Clerks of the House and other staff associated with Parliament. It was an education in itself. I have never played anybody who moved P-R6 into my backyard with such effect and then pinned me for the rest of the match. It was a great lesson.

I know that other colleagues play chess repeatedly in the chess room. I do not play as I believe it would become an addiction and Members of Parliament have a few other things to do other than play chess. My chess is confined to playing my wife. I think of Julius Silverman, who educated us all. He was not only an excellent Member of Parliament but an extremely good chess player. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) is also a good chess player. I think of other hon. Members, some of whom have passed on, some of whom have retired, who get great pleasure from playing each other in the chess room under the portrait of Sir Watson Rutherford playing Mr. Bonar Law.

Insofar as an Adjournment debate can do it, let the message go out from the House that we are absolutely behind all those who brought Gary Kasparov here and who are responsible for popularising chess, particularly in the inner cities and in schools where it is most needed.

8.43 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): First, I thank the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for securing the Adjournment debate and for focusing the attention of the House, and, I hope, that of the nation, on the value of chess.

In common with the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) I rise bruised and battered having barely survived one round with the world chess champion. I have also profited from discussing with him the value of chess. I am pleased that today he was accompanied by the distinguished impresario of chess, himself a great player, Raymond Keene, and also by Mr. Jonathan Speelman, one of the greatest players in the world and a great tribute to British chess.

It is vital that we do not get smug or complacent about the standing of British chess. That we have reached such pre-eminence is largely a tribute to amateurs and the voluntary efforts of so many people.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Bristol, North West about the funding of chess. Frankly, I believe that it is woefully inadequate. It is time that we started—the Government are the Government to do it and today is the day to give that pledge—to fund chess on a proper basis. If such funding is provided, chess will be elevated into a great game for men and women and boys and girls. Those young people will have an opportunity to develop important faculties as well as channelling their energies in such a desirable and productive manner.

The Knights of Caissa, an organisation set up to bring together the youth of Britain, the Soviet Union and America who could take chess into schools and thus drive out the more malevolent influences from them, deserves this House's support and commendation. It deserves to be endorsed by the Minister. I hope that he will be able to give a commitment to consider the excellent programme and prospectus that that organisation has produced and that he will be able to give that project long-term backing.

A fortnight ago, I had discussions with the Scottish Chess Federation, which is perturbed about the precarious level of funding in Scotland. I am sorry that the Minister responsible for Scottish education, the hon. Member for Stirling, (Mr. Forsyth), is unable to be present to hear the pungent criticisms that have been made of Scottish Office funding of chess.

I do not want this debate to be a time for recriminations. Today I believe that we all want to celebrate the fact that the world champion is in Britain promoting chess—he has so many fans here. We should mark that occasion by recognising the need to promote chess in the voluntary sector with hard cash. I hope that the Minister is generous enough to endorse that need.

8.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on the timely nature of this debate. He has chosen a historic moment in the House's history and I cannot let it pass without entering into the record the results of the chess match between the world champion and hon. Members of the House. I have it on good authority that my hon. Friend lasted for 32 moves with Mr. Kasparov. I am also advised that my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) acquitted themselves well. I believe they are the Members who lasted the longest with their formidable opponent.

I hope that those hon. Members will be duly acknowledged in their constituencies for that particularly cerebral effort. We are not admired for many things, but I hope that, on occasions, we are admired for the type of brain power that was deployed this evening. I shall bring

to the attention of my colleagues in the Scottish Office the comments made by the hon. Members for Linlithgow and for Edinburgh, South.

I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West who appears here apparently none the worse for wear after taking on, with no more reinforcements than necessary, Grandmaster Kasparov earlier. I admire my hon. Friend's bravura and enthusiasm, if not his nerve, in even contemplating such a task.

We were indeed privileged to have Gary Kasparov here —evidence of the increasing warmth in our relations with his country as well as of the warmth of enthusiasm for that great game, for which he is such a notable ambassador.

As my hon. Friend said, chess is perhaps uniquely placed to cut across not only national and linguistic barriers, but those of sex, age, race, culture and background. The catalogue of social, cultural and intellectual benefits offered by chess is almost endless, and a number of them have been put forward this evening. I am surprised, therefore, and somewhat disappointed, to find that there are so few references to chess in great literature. But they seem to suggest that chess can throw some light on some of the deeper mysteries of human experience.

I do not expect my hon. Friend to agree with Henry James Byron's sharp statement, "Life's too short for chess." It all depends, I suppose, on how one plays the game—of life, or chess, as one likes. Thomas Huxley explored the chess metaphor richly when he said:

> "The chess-board is the world; the pieces are the phenomena of the universe; the rules of the game are what we call the rules of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance."

Equally intriguing is a quotation from Robert Browning, appropriately from a poem called "Bishop Blougram's Apology":

> "And so we stumble at truth's very test!
> All we have gained then by our unbelief
> Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
> For one of faith diversified by doubt;
> We called the chess-board white, we call it black.
> 'Well', you rejoin, "the end's no worse, at least';
> We've reason for both colours on the board;
> Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
> And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?"

Intriguing though that thought is, my use of this quotation should not be taken to imply that I do not have as much faith in the value of chess as does my hon. Friend. But let us not forget that this faith will never be universally shared. Some misguided people will reject chess as elitist or over-competitive or, for all its apparent peace and quiet, as too militaristic in its overtones, or too much associated with foibles such as sulks and temper tantrums, or of no more intrinsic educational value than, say, that other popular board game, Scrabble. At bottom, it is all a question of choice, which we prize highly, and there is no danger that people in Britain, in their millions, will not continue to make their choice in favour of chess as a supremely rewarding pastime.

My Department has for many years made an annual grant to the admirable British Chess Federation, and I understand that the federation is seeking to promote chess at all levels and for all ages through the schools and hopes to introduce new award schemes in the near future as well as producing a series of leaflets for school chess clubs, which will be in addition to its video on chess for children. So we have not been inactive in this matter.

Mr. Dalyell: How much was the grant last year?

Mr. Butcher: Speaking from memory, it was about £37,000.

Mr. Dalyell: I am not trying to catch the Minister out, but I put it to him that £37,000 is tiny compared with the potential good that could be done throughout the United Kingdom. Will he, after this debate, reflect whether a substantial increase could be made? It really would be value for money.

Mr. Butcher: I will deal with the question of funding and what has been called an endorsement of the game of chess, and I must be careful, as I shall explain, not to make it a sort of official Department of Education and Science programme. There are some aspects of chess in our schools, of which the hon. Member for Linlithgow will be aware, which would not be helped by an atmosphere of officialdom or of compulsion somehow creeping into it. The joy of chess is its voluntary nature and the fact that it becomes a pastime that develops into an exceedingly rewarding intellectual challenge.

Having explained that we have made a grant, the question is whether the Government should be doing more to encourage chess, particularly in inner-city schools, as implied by my hon. Friend. We must recognise that in schools chess is an extra-curricular activity, and many schools have active chess clubs. But some people might wonder whether it would be right for the Government to go any way towards promoting in schools specific initiatives in chess, thereby taking the risk of stifling the very essence of what makes pastimes most rewarding—its voluntary nature and the enthusiasm of individual motivation and commitment: indeed, the element of choice itself.

I know that my hon. Friend—and, I suspect, Labour Members—are far from suggesting a "state takeover" of chess. Anything that smacked of that would be anathema to us. Chess is fun, and intellectual fun. It is taken up by children voluntarily. Their interest may have been stimulated by a friend, a relative or a teacher. Chess is thriving, and those who are deeply committed to it and play it well—and those who may play it but infrequently and badly—regard it as a personal matter of choice and do not need official encouragement from the Department. The last thing we want to do—for those who may not have taken it up yet but have not closed their minds to it—is go any way towards suggesting that they should take it up because the Department thinks it would be good for them.

I hope that hon. Members do not think I am being negative. I am being positive by paying tribute to the vitality of the game, which has thrived and survived for centuries, and to the commitment of individuals who can inspire others with enthusiasm for the game and hence keep it alive in a way that no official edicts would hope to do.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow hinted at that very process in his involvement in chess at the academy of which he spoke. Surely, that atmosphere, the spark and enthusiasm that came from that process, did not come

[Mr. Butcher]

from an official programme designed to encourage him or to get youngsters to be interested in chess. They enjoyed the joy of discovery and they did so with great enthusiasm.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister aware that in chess tournaments, inter-school matches and particularly inter-area matches, somebody must pay for the minibuses, the heating and lighting and all the other logistics that are involved? Can the Minister give a breakdown of the grant of £37,000?

Mr. Butcher: I explained the sort of activities that are supported. I cannot at this hour give the hon. Gentleman an account of how much went towards which kind of activity. I thought it would be helpful to indicate the range of activities that were supported. I will write to him with the detail he has requested.

My hon. Friend rightly refrained from putting forward chess as a panacea for the social and educational problems perceived to exist in the inner cities. I will mention some of the measures that my Department is taking to improve the standards of education and the quality of life for young people in the inner cities.

I need not dwell at length at the question of city technology colleges, but they are targeted precisely on inner-city school children to improve their life chances. Anyone who has any doubts about the ethos of CTCs should talk to the people where they are currently in operation. Indeed, the principal of the Nottingham city technology college is clear on the identification of the cohort of young people in inner cities who should receive the benefits of this form of education.

My hon. Friend will be aware that business has pledged over £34 million in sponsorship, an unprecedented response to an education initiative. We have also increased the educational building allocations for inner city areas. We are funding a project providing intensive management training for teachers in 45 inner-city schools. An education support grant programme has been running for a number of years with a view to improving urban primary schools. Many such programmes are taking place and the Government are aware that they must secure the best possible return, not merely in terms of cash but in terms of changing the life chances of young people and school-children in inner cities. That is what this is all about.

My hon. Friend vividly and entertainingly used the chess metaphor and the example of the disciplines of chess and what they bring to young people, by illustrating their benefit to young people in inner cities. Some people who are unfamiliar with the game may have regarded chess with some apprehension, because 32 pieces moving around 64 squares in a manner designed to confuse and confound all but a few may have mystified them. However, I am hoping that that mystification will be eroded and reduced in our society. Attitudes are changing. Chess is now seen by many, and rightly so, as a means of promoting logical, disciplined and independent thought among children.

This change in attitude has been reflected in the advances in the state of British chess. Twenty years ago the United Kingdom did not have a single grandmaster. We now have more than 10, and the figure is rising every year. In 1984, the English men's squad came second to the Soviet Union at the chess olympiad in Greece and went on to confirm its No. 2 ranking by again winning silver medals at the 1986 olympiad in Dubai and the 1988 olympiad in Thessalonika. There have also been numerous significant individual performances and several world titles in youth events. So we have come a long way in a relatively short space of time and the time is surely not far away when we will be challenging for the number one spot in the world.

I appreciate that there is also a Scottish dimension to this debate. I hope that Opposition Members will not mind if I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West, although I am sure that he needs no reminding, of the immense progress that has been made in British chess over the past 20 years.

I know that there are many people whom we must thank for their sponsorship and encouragement that has enabled this dramatic improvement to take place, and I am pleased that my own Department has played its own part by providing support for the British Chess Federation through its annual grant to assist with administrative costs and the expense of sending British players to international tournaments. I am glad that my hon. Friend has emphasised the scope for further developments in chess, particularly with young people.

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to ask the Minister about the question of sending players on journeys to international tournaments. Will the Minister pass on the concern felt about that to the Scottish Office in the hope that it will reply by letter as to whether anything constructive can be done to help our promising chess players to travel?

Mr. Butcher: I am coming to that point in my penultimate observations. I said at the beginning of my comments tonight that I would draw to the attention of my Scottish colleagues the record of this debate. I shall do so and shall, of course, include the comment that the hon. Member for Linlithgow has just made.

I shall return to the reasons why we all endorse the lessons, disciplines and messages that come from chess. Chess players use their memory and their reasoning powers. They are strategists. It is of benefit to young people to develop and use those skills in the competition of an ancient game. I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that we shall look with great interest at the work to which he refers which is being done across the world to see what lessons can be learned and how they might best be promoted in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend said that there was nothing wrong with occasionally being a follower. We should like to learn from other countries' experiences, and I give an undertaking that my Department will keep an eye on matters to see whether any of the lessons learned abroad can be applied to the United Kingdom.

We also need to learn from the early experience of the chess centre in London, which could be a useful teacher for those who see education as a means of, at least, encouraging chess, in the various ways that we have tried to describe this evening. I mentioned the caveat earlier that, if chess became a state or DES-inducted exercise, it would lose something precious.

Mr. Dalyell: Can we receive an undertaking from the Department that it will monitor and take a sustained interest in the London centre initiative? It is terribly important to look at the benefits that may, and I believe will, come from having a centre where people can go, at almost any time of the day or evening, in order to play

chess. All I am asking for is a sustained interest in this experiment, and to see whether it could be transferred to other cities if it was considered valuable.

Mr. Butcher: I thought that was more or less what I had said. We have here on our doorstep a facility that will be part chess workshop, part competition venue. It *will*, if you like, be a laboratory of intensive chess playing. Therefore, I have no doubt that the lessons that we may learn from that about ensuring the popularity of chess will be duly noted.

I shall also mention the comments made about the Knights of Caissa initiative of which I have received notification. I have looked at the paperwork that has come though so far. My understanding is that the initiative is to be pursued for two or three years and then the DES and presumably other organisations will be invited to meet those involved in the initiative and judge the lessons of that exercise. If that is to be their policy and phasing, I am pleased to endorse that initiative, given that those involved are clear that they are conducting a testing, piloting and trial exercise from which lessons will be learned. Therefore, that initiative will be followed up.

Once again, I thank my hon. Friend not just for what he has done tonight for the whole House through his arrangement of this historic competition, but in initiating a debate on a subject that attracts the most vehement and affectionate support from hundreds of thousands of people in this country.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse (Schools)

9.8 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful for this opportunity of the Adjournment debate to speak on the subject of drugs and alcohol problems in our schools. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for being present to reply. Normally when we debate, we nearly always talk about problems of engineering, skill shortages and so on. However, this topic, which I am sure my hon. Friend would agree is in many ways just as important, will produce a slightly different debate from the ones that we are used to.

As someone who was a schoolmaster for 23 years and who ran a chess team, I was also interested in the previous debate and I was tempted to intervene, but thought better of it. However, I support the general theme that ran through it. I listened to the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and to the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). The hon. Member for Edinburgh, South referred to chess replacing other malevolent influences in schools. I do not know what he had in mind, but it certainly made me feel that this debate follows on naturally from the previous one. If drug abuse is not one of the malevolent influences that can creep into our schools, I do not know what is. There seems to be a link between trying to create good extra-curricular activities in good schools and considering the problems that our children can come up against in and out of school.

I have not come to this debate armed with statistics. However, there is no doubt about the social and physical harm that can, and is, done to young people by drug addiction, particularly if we consider the link between drug addiction and the AIDS virus, and the problems that that can bring to young lives. Therefore, we have a duty to protect our young people from becoming involved in any serious addiction.

It is perhaps appropriate that tomorrow the Bill that I have presented, the Amusement Machines (Protection of Children) Bill should, I hope, receive its Second Reading. That Bill deals with protecting young people from addiction. There is a link between the problems that exist in the amusement arcades and drug addiction. Therefore, it is appropriate that I should have the opportunity to mention that tonight in the Adjournment debate.

In Norwich, as in so many parts of the country, there are continuing drug problems. While we are talking about young people, I want to pay a particular tribute to organisations in Norwich which deal with the rehabilitation of young people who have become involved in drug addiction.

The Matthew project runs a helpline, and I have spoken about its good work in previous Adjournment debates. There is also the Life of the World Trust, which has now been established for some 20 years and has operated from centres in various parts of Britain to help in the rehabilitation of young people with drug problems. Its aim is to prepare those young people for a return to a normal lifestyle, free from their dependency on drugs. Over the past 20 years, the Life of the World Trust has been successful with hundreds of young people who have become involved in drug addiction. Hebron house has recently been established in Norwich, and it is doing continuing good work with ex-drug dependants.

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

Although drug abuse has not been so much in the news recently, the problem has not gone away from our schools or from among adults. All the evidence is that the problem remains serious, not only in Norwich, but throughout Britain. The only up-to-date figures that I have been able to obtain this week refer to drug seizures for 1988. Customs and Excise officers seized a record £185 million worth of illegal drugs during 1988—an increase of almost 60 per cent. by street value on the previous year. I accept that taking seizure figures may not be the best way to try to determine a trend. After all, that can depend on the size of the haul and the circumstances in which the Customs officers were able to achieve it.

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury, who is responsible for Customs matters, said recently that that 60 per cent. increase in the value of drugs seized during the past year reflects the increasing effectiveness of Customs and Excise efforts and—this is important—the growing scale of the threat. Therefore, although the problem has not been publicised a great deal recently, it would be wrong for any hon. Member to think that it has gone away. The trend is still adverse and that is why it is appropriate that we are having this debate tonight.

I am aware that the Government and the Department of Education and Science have been contemplating further initiatives to deal with drug and alcohol abuse in schools. Everyone has a role to play—families, schools, Churches and other leading figures and organisations in society.

At this stage, it is important to say bluntly that, just as illness is a sign of some sort of weakness within the individual involved—that is in no way to lay blame on that individual—so drug abuse is a sign of weakness, or even, to use stronger language, of decadence in some sections of society. After all, we can link the problems of drug and alcohol abuse with the problems of boredom, psychological disturbance, and so on. Therefore, wider issues are raised when we debate this topic.

It is not easy for any hon. Member to come up with a way to deal with these serious problems, but that does not mean that we have no responsibility—quite the reverse. We have a great responsibility, and the Department of Education and Science, with its responsibility for schools, also has a great responsibility. That is why I am looking forward to my hon. Friend's reply, bringing us up to date with the initiatives that the Department is preparing.

The effect of alcohol abuse among the young is also well known and serious. Longer-term health problems can arise as a result of alcohol abuse and behavioural problems are very much in the news at present. There are the lager lout phenomenon and the riot and crowd control problems. Without being too specific, many of the recent incidents in football stadiums and so forth are alcohol related. In addition, there is the problem of drink-driving and I want to pay tribute to the good work done by my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Transport for their successful campaigns in tackling that problem.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to say more this evening about the initiatives that he has in mind, perhaps through the schools and the education system, for the prevention of alcohol, drug and solvent abuse. All those forms of addiction are linked. They cannot be separated one from the other. In addition, as I said earlier, we must link all those with the problem of AIDS.

The Education Reform Act 1988 introduced the national curriculum, which says that it is our duty to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical developments of pupils at school and of society, and also to prepare pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences in adult life. If that is the aim within our schools, it must be right to consider ways in which we can prevent drug abuse and help our young people to have a better spiritual, moral and cultural preparation for life.

I hope not just that my hon. Friend will recognise the ways in which the Department of Education and Science, through administrative initiatives, can deal with those problems—I am sure that we shall hear a lot about that when my hon. Friend replies—but that he will recognise and confirm that the tone and quality of schools is of great importance in dealing with such problems. That is not to say that, when dealing with individual human beings, there will not be difficulties in the best of schools, but my general point, is that the tone of the school, the leadership of the head teacher, the quality of the teachers and the general way in which the school is run, are relevant when we are considering the malevolent problems that come into schools and affect young people. The old-fashioned term "discipline" is relevant to the quality, tone and success of our schools, and the way in which young people leave them prepared for life in every possible way.

It is important to recognise that, in addition to any initiatives that we shall be debating tonight, the organisation of schools, which we shall not have time to debate tonight, and the morale of schools and teachers are relevant to this subject. An extra-curricular activity such as chess, which we debated earlier, can be linked with other sporting activities to show how important that aspect of school life is in preventing the type of problems to which I am drawing attention.

Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to the good work done by so many teachers. In particular, I want to identify those in my constituency of Norwich, North and in Norwich and Norfolk generally. They are doing good work in social and health education, about which we are particularly thinking this evening, and they are doing a great deal generally to help to improve the quality of education in schools in Norwich and Norfolk at a time of rapid change. I welcome those changes and the speed with which the Government have addressed themselves to educational problems recently, and I pay tribute to the teachers in Norwich and Norfolk for the way in which they are responding to them.

A ministerial group has recently dealt with alcohol abuse and during the past few days I had a chance to see the circular that has resulted from that initiative. Again, through my hon. Friend the Minister, I want to pay tribute to Ministers for that work. The circular and the results flowing from it must be good news.

However, let me inject a cautionary note. When I finish reading a circular I find that I am not imbued with the kind of enthusiasm with which I would like to be imbued. Even after six years as a Member of Parliament I only have to read a Civil Service circular to find that all my enthusiasm and interest in a subject has somehow waned. That does not necessarily mean—in case my hon. Friend should misunderstand me—that the circular is wrong or that there is a better way of doing it. It means that the circular and

the administrative initiatives, excellent though I am sure they are, by the Department of Education and Science must be followed up with enthusiasm at local authority level, school level and so forth.

I congratulate the Department of Education and Science on the work it has been doing in this area and I look forward to hearing more about recent initiatives very shortly. We have the booklet on drug misuse and the young, which I know has had very wide circulation in my constituency and throughout the country. We have had the initiatives on teaching materials to help with problems of drug abuse and so on. More recently, we have had the largest education support grant ever, which includes sums of money particularly targeted on dealing with the misuse of drugs. I gather that in my own county, Norfolk, over £21,800 will be put to that particular use in the coming year. This must all be good news, because it will help local authorities to develop a strategy for dealing with drug abuse through the mechanisms which they have available.

All this is part of the Government's imaginative and vigorous approach to education and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his part in that. I look forward very much to his reply and in particular to what he has to say about up-to-date initiatives to help with the very serious problems of drug and alcohol abuse in our schools.

9.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): First, I wish to thank my hon. Friend for bringing forward this topic tonight. As I hope to demonstrate, I shall respond very clearly to his invitation to indicate the major programme to be mounted in our schools.

First, I join him in the tribute that he has paid to the Matthew project and to the Life of the World Trust. I know that he takes a great interest in these matters and I am sure that, just as the people of Norwich are well served by him, so young people who may have a problem are served by those two bodies.

The scale of the problems of alcohol and drug misuse among young people has been highlighted by work done by Mr. John Balding at Exeter university. Surveys involving over 18,000 pupils in 1987 revealed that over 74 per cent. of fifth-year boys and 65 per cent. of fifth-year girls had consumed alcohol in the past week, with over 10 per cent. of the boys consuming the equivalent of more than 10 pints of beer. The same surveys revealed that up to 12 per cent. of fifth-year boys and 14 per cent. of girls had been offered cannabis or other more harmful drugs at some time during their teens. Those are chilling figures and reinforce our determination to help young people to avoid alcohol and drug abuse.

For the past six months I have been undertaking a review of all the policy issues which must come together in the formation of a plan to be applied in our schools to deal with the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. During that period I have chaired working meetings with drugs education co-ordinators and together we have assembled a great deal of information and know-how, and the co-ordinators have responded magnificently to my invitation to play their full part in the policy formation process.

I should explain that the DECs are in post in all English local education authorities, funded through education support grants and charged with the task of co-ordinating education programmes for schools and colleges that disseminate the best practice in methods of reducing the risk of drug abuse by the young. I have also spoken to organisations such as TACADE, Kaleidoscope, the City roads rehabilitation centre and life education centres.

During those discussions and research activities it became very clear that through education we should increase the effort devoted to reduction of the demand for drugs; that we should create a generation of school children and young people who will turn their backs on dealers and pushers. It has also become clear that drug abuse, alcohol abuse and AIDS are related issues that can be tackled in a co-ordinated health education programme and that our future policy for school programmes should reflect this.

I said earlier that my hon. Friend's Adjournment debate was timely. It is so because I am now in a position to announce to the House the broad objectives and measures of our policy of demand reduction, which has benefited from the information-gathering stage I mentioned earlier. I can announce tonight a £7 million programme for the year 1990-91. Of this, £4 million will be used to support a new, broadened remit for drugs education co-ordinators, who will now be responsible for the provision of information and advice to schools on alcoholism and AIDS, in addition to their existing work on drugs. Funding for the co-ordinators—now to be called health education co-ordinators—has been guaranteed for at least three years in recognition of the fact that those programmes cannot be short-term programmes but will require a long and intensive effort by local education authorities and schools.

A further £3 million will be provided under the local education authority training grants scheme to fund in-service training of teachers covering the same key areas of health education.

I can also announce tonight a 10-point plan. I will deal with the salient points.

The first is the provision of information for parents, to be distributed via the schools, subject to the approval of school governors. The precise messages for parents will have to be agreed with local conditions in mind and will involve the co-operation of a variety of organisations, whose views will be sought.

The second point is to examine the effectiveness of existing health education and if necessary apply the lessons learned and modify the messages to young people.

The third is to integrate health education messages into the national curriculum in ways which are compatible with the foundation subjects and with existing programmes of personal and social education.

The fourth is the gathering together of examples of best international practice, with particular reference to the reasons for success or failure in other countries.

The fifth is the greater involvement of the private sector in the sponsorship of programmes on drugs and alcohol. An excellent example of this approach came from the Scotch Whisky Association, which supported a research project and an excellent conference on alcohol and young people.

The sixth is wider incorporation of health education issues in initial teacher training courses.

The seventh is development of further curriculum materials for teachers to build on the excellent work of TACADE, for example, with its drug-wise teaching pack.

[Mr. John Butcher]

The eighth is to secure better information on the health-related behaviour of young people. The ninth is to define in conjunction with the Department of Health specific and clear messages for different categories of young people—general messages for all young people at school, messages to those who are experimenting, messages to those who are indulging in regular or casual use, and messages to users with an addiction problem.

I am advised that concentrating on a particular substance or giving a high profile to a particular drug can be counter-productive. The best approach is for young people to be taught about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a healthy body. They need to be given the skills to know how to resist pressures to misuse drugs and alcohol for health, lifestyle and social reasons. In a nutshell, our message to young people must be: "Stay healthy. Stay in control." Therefore, our tenth initiative is to give wider publicity to the stay healthy, stay in control message.

Those who follow this sad and unhappy issue will know that the drug pusher may not be obviously identifiable as a furtive, evil-looking character on a street corner. To those who may be susceptible, the pusher may currently be a friend. He may pose as a friend at a time when the potential victim has drunk too much and is offered a substance. We must ensure that people who find themselves in such situations recognise that moment and say no. If they do not say no, they may be on the first rung of the ladder to oblivion.

My hon. Friend is right to say that drink, drugs and AIDS are related. Someone who has drunk too much at a party may say yes to the substance that is offered to them. They may move on to harder drugs. They may eventually inject, share needles, and then face an increasing risk of contracting the virus that leads to AIDS.

I have said very little about alcohol, yet it is a wider problem than drugs. It affects young and old. Dr. Anthony Thorley estimates that 25 per cent. of acute hospital beds for males are occupied by patients suffering from alcohol-related problems. A small but still too large proportion of young people seem to think that they can have a good time only through getting drunk. That phenomenon in itself raises a large number of questions. They merit a debate in their own right, and I shall not discuss them this evening. Nevertheless, we know that providing information on the effects of alcohol on health may not be enough. We must point out the bad effect of alcohol abuse on personal relationships, loss of respect from friends, and loss of appeal to the opposite sex. In other words, those messages are all relevant to the social preoccupations and self-esteem of teenagers and of young people.

I am particularly impressed by the campaign along those lines pursued through local radio commercials and advertisements in young people's magazines in New South Wales. The messages are strong and clear. Teenage boys, for example, are told:

"If you don't want to look like a jerk, don't get drunk."

That is the clear message, in the clear, Australian style. The campaign's messages imply also that a boy is likely to lose a girl friend if he insults her or talks gibberish while under the influence of drink. It is those very personal, very apt and very relevant messages that must supplement the informative process in health education programmes.

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for raising tonight's topic. I hope that the House agrees that the programme I announced, which will cost £7 million, is a significant initiative. We shall monitor and manage that 10-point plan. I assure my hon. Friend that on such a serious issue, the initiative's management plan will be checked and assessed at regular intervals to see whether it hits its targets. It is on-going and will continue for three years. From that point on, if we find that we are winning, we may change the programme. I hope that that will be the case because, for the sake of our nation's children, we have to win.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 May 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *Mr. Harold Walker, in the Chair*]

PETITION

Animal Experiments

9.35 am

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): It is my honour to present a petition containing in excess of 60,000 signatures from all parts of Great Britain. The petition could have been even greater because, according to opinion polls, 80 per cent. of the population are against the use of animals for experiments for warfare purposes. The overwhelming majority of people have expressed that view several times and are extremely hostile to the use of animals for warfare experimentation.

The experiments are cruel and the animals, if they are lucky they die quickly, otherwise they die horrendous, painful and often lingering deaths. The vast majority of the experiments are commissioned by the Government and carried out at the Government's own research establishment at Porton Down, but the work is often contracted out to other institutions which carry out equally cruel experiments on animals. Such experiments are a disgrace in a civilised society and must be stopped immediately because the results are of no value. Human beings have no right to use other sentients for the purposes of animal experimentation for warfare. I, along with the other 60,000 signatories agree with that view.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 28 April]

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

PERSONS AUTHORISED TO PASS AND STAMP EQUIPMENT

Amendment proposed [28 April]: No. 66, in page 1, line 5, leave out the words 'Secretary of State', and insert the words

'local weights and measures authority for the area in which an applicant for a licence has his head office or his registered office'.—*[Mr. Illsley.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment made: No. 37, in page 1, line 5, after 'State' insert

', after consultation with any local weights and measures authority appearing to him to be concerned,'.—*[Mr. Wiggin.]*

9.37 am

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I beg to move amendment No. 38, in page 1, line 7, leave out 'installer or repairer'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments:

No. 30, in page 1, line 11, after 'determine', insert

'but a licence may not be granted to any person employed by a manufacturer, installer or repairer of equipment to which section 11 of the 1985 Act applies.'.

No. 41, in page 2, line 5, at end insert—

'(4A) the secretary of State may by order—

(a) extend the application of this section to persons who carry on business as installers or repairers of equipment to which section 11 of the 1985 Act applies; and

(b) provide that this section shall have effect in relation to such persons with such modifications as may be specified in the order;

and the power to make such an order shall be exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'

Mr. Wiggin: The amendment has been moved at the request of the Association of County Councils to allow the Government to take a longer-term view before including installers and repairers in the Bill.

Amendments agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 39, in page 1, line 10, after 'satisfies', insert

'the Secretary of State as to the matters mentioned in subsection (1A) below and complies with'.—*[Mr. Wiggin.]*

No. 40 page 1, line 15, at end insert—

'(1A) The matters referred to in subsection (1)(b) above are—

(a) the adequacy of the quality assurance system which is to be adopted by the applicant;

(b) the adequacy of the procedures which are to be so adopted for ensuring that any equipment which is passed and stamped by the applicant conforms to or complies with such of the following as are applicable to it, namely—

[Mr. Wiggin]

(i) any pattern in respect of which a certificate of approval under section 12 of the 1985 Act is in force; and

(ii) the requirements of regulations under section 15 of that Act (including in particular the requirement that the equipment should fall within the prescribed limits of error); and

(c) the traceability to national measurement standards of any testing equipment which is to be used by the applicant.'

No. 41, in page 2, line 5, at end insert—

'(4A) The Secretary of State may by order—

(a) extend the application of this section to persons who carry on business as installers or repairers of equipment to which section 11 of the 1985 Act applies; and

(b) provide that this section shall have effect in relation to such persons with such modifications as may be specified in the order;

and the power to make such an order shall be exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'—*[Mr. Wiggin.]*

Question proposed, That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I should like to address the Committee on the momentous issue whether the clause should stand part of the Bill. We may note in passing that even though this measure is of massive consequence, there is not a single representative of the Liberal party in his place.

The Committee has become accustomed to the Liberal party proclaiming to be the champion of the customer, but when the customer's interests are being debated we note the characteristic absence of the Liberal party. Naturally, I defer to the views of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary and, having drawn the attention of the Committee to the matter, I shall resume my seat.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

PASSING AND STAMPING OF EQUIPMENT BY AUTHORISED PERSONS

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Gow: I do not wish to detain the Committee but I should like to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary, who is as sound upon this as he is upon all issues, to a notable feature of the clause. Mercifully, no reference has to be made to those who sit in grand offices in Brussels. Even our right hon. and learned Friend who was recently knighted, Sir Leon Brittan, has no power to intervene in relation to clause 2. That is of great satisfaction to me and to every hon. Member of the Committee.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The clause should be examined a little before we allow it to pass. What exactly do we mean by an "authorised person"? Would the term include not only those who are authorised by licence under section 1 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985, but people put forward by consumer organisations?

Does the person authorised by licence have a right of access to the appropriate Minister of a Government Department, thereby extending the normal concept of what is meant by an authorised person? Many consumer groups that are concerned with aspects of weights and measures equipment could offer useful advice, but are rarely consulted. One of the worrying aspects of life under the Government is that power, influence and advice have moved from the ordinary people to various official bodies. Those bodies are dominated by a Government who, over the past 10 years, have shown their willingness to intervene in such matters.

Subsection (3) says:

"after the word 'passed', in the first place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words 'by an inspector' and for the words 'an inspector' there shall be substituted the words 'the inspector'".

My hon. Friends will recognise the problems that will arise there. The words "the inspector" specifically mean that there will be only one type of inspector when, surely, the whole thrust of modern democracy is to allow bodies, such as local authorities, to put forward inspectors.

I live under two local authorities—Strathclyde, which deals with massive regional affairs, and my district council of Renfrew. Both are perfectly equipped to put forward an official or a councillor. I should like advice about subsection (3) and about the whole Bill. The subsection says "the inspector" and that means that the Government have in mind only one kind of inspector.

9.45 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is pretty clear what this is all about. Last week, we discussed the early stages of the Bill, and during the debate it became evident that it was a Government Bill which had been pushed into the hands of the Back-Bench Tory who introduced it. I believe that earlier, at the Government's behest, he agreed to postpone proceedings on the Bill, and there is no doubt that, once again, here is a relaxation of important rules that have applied for years. The Government are intent on relaxing those rules, just as they have relaxed the rules on health and safety and the inspector appointed will be "one of us". He will obviously be a supporter of the Tory party, a member of the "Thatcher 10-year clan". As a result, the Bill will assist people who want to relax the rules and to remove authority from local authorities which are publicly accountable. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members are intervening on my intervention.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech. If he is intervening, it is an extraordinarily long intervention.

Mr. Skinner: I am sure that you know, Mr. Walker, that, occasionally, there are long interventions. Sometimes there are very long speeches, but sometimes they are necessary, such as when a Bill was being rushed through in what was nearly a clandestine fashion by this obnoxious Government and one of their supporters. The Bill has had a chequered history.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention—if it is an intervention—is excessively long. Perhaps he should seek to catch my eye and address himself to the matter before the Committee, which is that clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Buchan: My hon. Friend's intervention was extremely helpful. This is not the first time that I have had to rely upon him. I have found that time after time he

brings a level of expertise, understanding and wisdom to the most obscure corners of legislation. With my hon. Friend, I have explored the hills of south Derbyshire on a Friday morning. I did not know when I arrived today that the Bill was on. I wish that I had been warned, because, as my hon. Friend says, it is not untypical of the Government to bring in on a Friday apparently innocuous Bills which, when examined, are found to be fraught with problems and dangers to the ordinary people. That is why I am concerned with the insertion of the words "the inspector" instead of "an inspector", bringing it down precisely to only one kind of inspector, not any inspector. I can think of many people who should be appointed inspectors, such as members of the Labour group in my district council, including Councillor MacMaster, who is the leader of the group, and Councillor Reilly, who is a brilliant expert on housing and would have much to say on weights and measures matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was absolutely right to introduce the fatal phrase that has dominated life over the past decade—"one of us". We know that, as has happened throughout the life of this Government, the question will be asked, "Is he one of us?" We often find out that, when a clause is apparently innocuous, it contains one subsection that must be closely observed before the clause is passed. What does it mean to have people who are authorised or unauthorised? In Bill after Bill, two kinds of people have been referred to, so that there are "us" and "them". That is what has happened during the decade of what is amusingly called "Thatcherism".

The Under-Secretary is fortunate, because he is not only "the Minister" but "a Minister". He straddles the borders even of nationality in this country. I am not sure to what extent the Bill extends from England into Wales and Scotland. The Minister might like to intervene and let me know whether it will extend to Scotland, because, if it does, some of we Scottish Members would like to know to what extent.

Mr. Skinner: I should have explained earlier to my hon. Friend that the Government did not give a proper explanation when this matter was last debated, and only a fleeting reference was made to certain provisions. The hon. Member who introduced it did not say much about it. Thus, my hon. Friend may not get from the Government the information he is seeking. However, it seems that the Under-Secretary is beginning to rise, so perhaps the information may be forthcoming.

Mr. Buchan: I should like to hear whether the measure applies to Scotland and, indeed, the whole of Scotland. In some areas Scotland has regional councils and district councils, but in other areas it has only single councils known as island councils. I was brought up in the islands, in Orkney. Weights and measures were always on our mind up there. There are problems in an island community, which has to be served by ships, so that there are questions about the weights of cargoes, and so on. Living there is quite different from living in the rest of Scotland. Will local authorities be involved in this case? —*[Interruption.]* I want to explain my question fully. The Under-Secretary should not be impatient.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I am getting anxious.

Mr. Buchan: I know that the Minister is anxious to give information, and I welcome that. He has the whole morning to do so. It is a good measure of a weighty Minister that he is keen to give answers to questions. However, I must explain the question fully.

Like myself, the Minister has had an academic career —at least, I think he has. I can remember one dreadful occasion when I failed to read the rubric at the top of an examination paper. The normal advice had been to answer three or perhaps four questions. I saw a question on John Donne that I knew inside out and spent two and a half hours out of three answering it. The rest of the time I spent on, I think, Spenser. As I was about to walk out of the room, I read at the top of the examination paper the rubric "Candidates must attempt at least four questions". I sweated for some weeks, but there must have been a generous examiner, because I passed. Therefore, it is necessary to know the fullness of a question before an answer can be given.

In Scotland, we have a habit of sometimes using archaic terms. We sometimes use a kind of language of our own. In one area an ounce can mean an animal with four legs. In another area an ounce may be involved with weights and measures. Similarly if we say an ell—if we give an inch and take an ell—it may be meaningful in some parts of Scotland, or even Yorkshire or Derbyshire.

Mr. Skinner: If my hon. Friend wants answers to questions about inches and ells, he should remember that we have been dragged into this unmitigated disaster of the Common Market. The Common Market is against inches and ells. It is against all those things commonly known as British; it is trying to get rid of all the forms of measurement to which my hon. Friend is referring. After an extensive debate on this issue, we might find out why certain things have been left out. Is there a connection with the Common Market? Is this another surrender to people in the Common Market—the bureaucrats working on the big fat salaries who have nothing better to do than search for ells, inches, feet, miles and so on and delete them from the British language?

We must stand firm today. This could be a most important day in British history as we fight for the inches and ells, albeit in connection with a Bill that we do not want. I believe that, on this bleak Friday morning, my hon. Friend has found something very important—another Common Market ruse to remove these important forms of measurement that have been used in Britain throughout the centuries.

Mr. Buchan: That illustrates the wisdom of not immediately putting my question to the Minister. My hon. Friend will realise that I would have gone on to the issue that he has outlined. He will recall that he and I fought bitterly against entry to the Common Market, not just in defence of the ounce, the quart, the pint, and so on, but for all sorts of political and economic reasons. We were right to do so, when we consider the tons—another weight and measure—of goods flowing into the country and contributing to a reverse balance of trade amounting to a £14 billion deficit. We were nearly hounded out of office in 1964 because of a £100 million deficit—*[Interruption.]* I know that the Minister is anxious to get in, but he must let me finish the point I am making.

That figure of £14 billion is in pounds, and not the obscure measurement of money used in the Common

[Mr. Buchan]

Market—the ecu. It sounds like a curious animal. Are we going to stick to pounds, or will we have to absorb the Common Market terms? I used to have to fiddle with the green pound and the sterling pound. There are green pounds and ecus, and so on. We must measure that against the deficit into which this damnable Government have run us in the past decade. There is no mention of that in the Bill, yet every pound that we see in deficit can be measured in terms of trade and jobs lost to Britain. Jobs lost can also be measured in terms of human agony. I hope that the Minister is intent on finding out from the civil servants the answers to some of these questions. I hoped that he would be ready to give me an answer, but he is not, so I shall have to continue.

Above all, Mr. Walker—when you lean forward, Sir, I realise that you, like me, are concentrating on the subject at hand—does this Bill apply to Scotland? If it does, will different measurements and forms of administration be used in Scotland or in island councils? Shall we be looking for "an inspector" or "the inspector" and, if so, will it be somebody who has an understanding of consumer problems and the way that they are affected by this measure?

10 am

In Scotland we use the old terms, and we also have a separate administration. To what extent will that separate administration of the Scottish Office be affected? We have a Scottish shadow spokesman helping out today. I think that things are happening. I should like to know what they are, and I should like some advice on them. The Minister might like to give an answer on that.

To what extent will the Bill affect our continuing membership of the Common Market, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has asked? What will be the effect of subsection (3) on the events that will occur in 1992? On that date, there will be a disappearance of barriers, and a free market. What consequence will that have on British legislation? Is there any point in proceeding with this British legislation when we are within a couple of years of 1992?

Will we be forcing on the rest of Europe our ounces, pints and all the rest of our non-decimal measurements that still prevail in British lands? Will there have to be "an inspector" or "the inspector" for ports to determine the precise decimal quantification of metres as opposed to yards or tonnes measured in pounds, ounces, stones and hundredweights? Will there have to be an apparatus of "the" inspectors or "an" inspector at Dover, Folkestone or other ports? My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has not noticed that point. He has been busy, and I hope that he has got some useful advice.

The Common Market is not just a threat to our names and our acceptance of these measurements. We all know what a pint or a yard is, and we cannot conceive of a cricket ground measured in metres. However, 1992 is nearly upon us. Will there be a battery of civil servants to measure and weigh each crate, and translate tonnes into pounds?

Mr. Skinner: Many people have misconceptions about what is called the big bang of 1992. It will be about as big a bang as that in the stock market in 1987. Then they were forecasting all sorts of wonderful and beautiful things for Britain and——

The Chairman: Order. I am having a little difficulty in seeing what this has to do with the debate on whether clause 2 should stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: Because when we have these inspectors, and they will be as specified in the Bill, they will have to go to the ports and measure this, that and the other. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) was quite properly making the point that, because of all the hype and propaganda about what will happen in 1992, they will have to inspect, stamp and authorise a lot more goods than would otherwise be the case. He thinks that there will be a massive export of goods from Britain, but the opposite will happen. We already have a massive balance of payments deficit of nearly £20,000 million on trade alone.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): How much?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman should listen carefully. We are talking about trade, not about the balance of payments deficit. That includes the invisibles, which have also been falling since 1987. The inspectors will not be inspecting the invisibles, although this Government could try anything on. They might have invisible inspectors to inspect the invisibles. However, they will definitely have these inspectors who will be Tory inspectors, going to the ports. *[Interruption.]* There is no doubt about that. As long as this Prime Minister is here, she will be checking them out. Tory Members who are laughing must not think for a moment that these will be what I would call Secretary of State for Wales-type inspectors. They will be inspectors drawn from the belly of the Establishment—"one of us" type inspectors. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who has been referred to as a bladder of lard——

Mr. King: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am somewhat confused, because I am not sure who is speaking. Is the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) making a speech or an intervention? I am listening with great interest to him, but all I hear, apart from incoherent ramblings, is nothing to do with clause 2.

The Chairman: I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's confusion. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is intervening in the speech of the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), but is doing so at excessive length, which he should not. If he wishes to catch my eye later in the proceedings, he can make a speech. However, in the meantime we must recognise our convention that interventions should be brief.

Mr. Skinner: I shall wrap it up then, Mr. Chairman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South got the idea that many inspectors will be needed for the 1992 operation. I am saying that not many will be needed, because 1992 will be a damp squib. French and German goods will be coming here, so all the trade will be coming this way. We may have to inspect all the Common Market goods that will be flooding in, and we shall need a new sort of weights and measures Bill, but we should not assume that in all those ports, the Common Market will allow Britain to export goods.

Mr. Buchan: I see the problem. I had thought of it in only one way—how to translate yards to metres. I am glad that my hon. Friend intervened, because the Minister now has to answer another question, about how we shall demand of the French that they transfer metres into yards. This could lead to the break-up of the Common Market if we are not careful.

Mr. Forth: That would put the hon. Gentleman's old lady out of a job.

Mr. Buchan: Indeed it would. We are a strong family and are concerned with these problems. My wife has to deal with yet another dimension. The work that she does, weekend after weekend, as she batters at her typewriter while I batter at my word processor—I am defending the people of Britain, she is defending people in this monstrous regiment of the Common Market—will increase. We shall have to exchange notes translating pounds, ounces, pints and quarts back and forth.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has, as usual, gone to the heart of the problem. This point about the European aspect and the use of metres and other such measures may be a small one, but I want the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) to understand that, up to a year ago, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary was sound on European matters. However, he has undergone a Damascene experience. He has seen the European light and he is swashed up in the 1992 push of the Department of Trade and Industry. I urge the hon. Member for Paisley, South to make his case with force and candour because otherwise it will weigh little with my hon. Friend, the pro-European Minister.

Mr. Buchan: I am grateful for that advice, which I shall take to heart. Subsection (4)(a) and (b) will also have to be examined in close detail, as it affects the Common Market. The effort to get to the truth about this Bill has been a cross-party one, and that is helpful. I have seen Damascene conversions on this side of the House as well as on the Government side. There are some of us, however, who remain true to our faith. As has been pointed out, it has been more difficult for my wife than me, as she is absorbed in the strange milieu of Brussels and Strasbourg. I believe that if she can keep the light shining, it should be easier for some of us to do so.

It is right that we keep a watchful eye on both Front Benches regarding this issue. Today, the Minister is in the firing line and he has been put into an impossible situation. I understand his grief and the problems that face him. It is enough trouble to represent the Treasury Bench on a Friday morning, but to have to do so and defend what he knows in his heart of hearts to be the indefensible is a further problem.

I am concerned for the health of Ministers who have to bear the burden of speaking that which they know is not necessarily the truth. Truth is even more difficult to measure than weights. At least one can put an ounce on the scale, but "What is truth?" as jesting Pilate said. Truth is more difficult to measure, even with a Bill as neatly drafted as this.

The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) will also be aware of the skill with which parliamentary draftsmen must try to get through the various labyrinthine shadows —excuse my mixed metaphors—forced upon us by 1992 and the Common Market. Perhaps that is one reason why some of the legislation seems so harmful to we simple souls who believe that two and two make four. Such legislation is often prepared in the knowledge that the cataclysm of 1992 is upon us. I feel for the Minister and I know that he would willingly withdraw the Bill and redraft it in good English terms.

Mr. Forth: It is not my Bill.

Mr. Buchan: This poor unfortunate Minister. What is the Whips' Office doing sending a Minister here with a Bill that is not even his? Is this a private Member's Bill? Oh my goodness gracious me.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Buchan: An embarrassment of riches—I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has posed a serious question about Friday mornings. During the past few weeks the Government have taken Bills off the shelf and passed them to Tory Back Benchers. In essence they are Government Bills. We had one last week about which we had to talk for some considerable time. The Bills are passed to Tory Back Benchers so that they look as though they are private Members' Bills, but the net result is that Friday, reserved for private Members' Bills has been hijacked by the Government. The Minister has been stuck with the Bill today. The Government may not be altogether happy with it and no doubt they will express some reservations about it to make it look clean and decent. The truth is, however, that the Bill has come from the Government, off the shelf, into salmonella Wiggin's hands and he is using it.

Mr. Buchan: My hon. Friend is right. This is a Government Bill which has been handed to a Back Bencher so that he can do the job for them. Surely this should be called a hybrid Bill—this uneasy alliance between the Government and private Members. I note that my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) is standing at the Bar—we have another first-class speaker.

I know that hybrid Bills have been the source of some terror to the Government. I remember that a Government were almost brought down by a hybrid Bill and that a little skulduggery was practised in the Lobby to save the day. If it is the Government's new practice to get private Members to smuggle in Bills that they have not had the courage to bring in themselves, surely there should be separate legislation. "Erskine May" should open up a new chapter on Friday morning skulduggery.

Mr. Wiggin *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. The question before the Committee is that clause 2 stand part of the Bill. To put it mildly, our debate is moving away from that question. Hon. Members should address their remarks more directly to the question.

Mr. Buchan: I am sorry, but I have had so many interventions from Tory Back Benchers and from the Minister, who corrected me. If they had not intervened, much of what I have said would have been unnecessary.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman has been extremely unfair and cavalier in respect of my hon. Friend the Minister, for whom we both have a great affection for he is a man of high standing in the House. The hon. Gentleman must understand that my hon. Friend is in much the same position as any British ambassador who is sent abroad to lie for this country. The hon. Gentleman should not be so unfair to the Minister who has his job to do—he must represent the Department of Trade and Industry. However, distasteful it may be to us, to him there is a wonderful fresh taste in his mouth—the new discovery of Europe. The hon. Gentleman should not criticise my hon. Friend too strongly.

Mr. Buchan: I shall do my best and I shall be as gentle as I can, but the Minister is here representing the full majesty of the Government—he is sitting on the Treasury Bench.

10.15 am

Mr. Wiggin: Will the hon. Gentleman accept my absolute word that it was my intention to legislate on this matter, which is highly technical? When the hon. Gentleman reads the Bill and remotely understands what it is all about—he certainly does not at the moment—he will discover how technical it is. Because of its technical nature, I asked the Minister whether the Government would assist me in drafting the Bill and I am extremely grateful for their help.

In view of the hon. Gentleman's known family interests in the European Community, he should realise that one of the objects of the Bill is to try to get a step ahead of the Community, not to follow behind. Because of the hon. Gentleman's unintelligent opposition to the Bill, Britain will be disadvantaged and that is wrong.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman has revealed a new depth to the Bill, which is certainly labyrinthine. Apparently the Bill is a cunning device to subvert the Common Market and the Government have put an anti-Marketeer on the Treasury Bench to carry it through. This is a remarkable experience—all things unfold on a Friday morning. Who would have thought that the Bill could have concealed such duplicity—an anti-Marketeer Minister pretending to be a pro-Marketeer. It has been cunningly disguised as a private Member's Bill so that we think that it is not important. It is, however, fraught with importance as it is an attempt to beat 1992 by two years. This Bill should be called the Weights and Measures (Ditch the Common Market) (Amendment) Bill. That is what it is about.

I understand that the Minister is now ready to give me the answers that I sought. We have all morning to explore the rest of the clause and certainly clause 2(4) will require a great deal of discussion and explanation.

Will the clause apply to "an inspector" and not just "the inspector"? In that way we could appoint people who understand some of the problems and are not merely bureaucrats. How will Scotland be affected? Will island councils be treated differently from a regional or district council in Scotland, given that the Bill applies to Scotland? Will inspectors be appointed from laymen serving on the councils?

Above all, I wait to hear the Minister's response to the points raised about the Common Market. I had not realised that there was such depth to the Bill. Is this an attempt to subvert 1992? Is this a protective mechanism? Will our inspectors be trained so that they can look at a tonne and say that it is equivalent to 0·9 of another weight? Will they be able to distinguish a yard from an ell or a metre?

The Minister better have some notes about clause 2(4) as a lot of questions will be asked about the need for inspection. I am sure that my hon. Friends will have something to say about whether it should be "an inspector" or "the inspector". I shall conclude now, as I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will substantiate my remarks.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have listened carefully to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan)——

Mr. Forth: Is this a speech or an intervention?

Mr. Skinner: I was invited to speak by the Chair.

The Chairman: Order. I did not offer the hon. Gentleman any such invitation. He was simply seeking to catch my eye and therefore I called him.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, but, after I was called, the Minister —he has been referred to as an anti-marketeer, but he is a pro-marketeer—intervened from a sedentary position. That is uncalled for in this place. I am surprised that the Chair did not rebuke him for intervening in that fashion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South made an interesting and important speech, and he has every right to know whether the Bill applies to Scotland. The Bill has not been properly explained, and we are not sure what it is all about.

Mr. Wiggin: Absolutely right. The hon. Gentleman does not have a clue.

Mr. Skinner: But why is that? On the first occasion that the Bill was tabled, it was taken off for the day. That was a very interesting day. Other business was conducted while the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) sat in his place for about one and a half hours but then disappeared. That happened about four Fridays ago.

Mr. Buchan: Is my hon. Friend saying that the Bill has been introduced for some other purpose today? I might have known that, but I am an innocent in these matters.

Mr. Skinner: There has been a lot of jiggery-pokery over the past few Fridays. When the Bill was originally due to be considered in Committee, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare sat in his place for about two hours while the House debated the Control of Pollution Bill. That was an important Bill in the sense that it was debated at length one Friday. It was devised by the Government but handed to a Back Bencher who knew less about that Bill than perhaps the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare knows about the Bill now before the House, and who had to apologise to the House.

On that occasion, the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare walked out of the Chamber and left the Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill high and dry. When we challenged him and asked what was to happen to the Bill, he took it off the day's business. Last week, he had another crack at it, and for a few moments—no more than that —tried to explain some of its provisions. This morning, the hon. Gentleman is trying to wheedle the Bill through in next to no time. I understand that a number of

amendments were passed without any proper explanation, and clause 1 was passed. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South was busy elsewhere—probably in Scotland, trying to find out whether the Bill applies there.

It is significant that the Minister has not yet tried to explain to my hon. Friend whether the Bill applies to Scotland. We know that it is a Common Market Bill, but we still do not know whether it applies in Scotland in particular.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): It is hardly surprising that the Minister has not yet got to his feet. If the Bill is passed, it will relieve his Department of a lot of the work that is to be given to the quasi-private sector. It may be that the hon. Gentleman is a bit work-shy anyway and would sooner see the responsibilities involved placed elsewhere and not left within the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Skinner: There is no doubt about that. The whole reason for the Bill was summed up in my hon. Friend's remarks. During the course of the earlier short debate on the Bill, it became clear what the Government are about. The Government admit that they drew up the Bill. Even the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare admits that he received "help" from Government lawyers. It is a Government Bill handed to a Back Bencher, and the hon. Gentleman thinks that he will get his name into the history books for getting the Bill passed. It is a kind of semi-privatisation. If the Government had any guts, they would have introduced it as part of their legislative programme.

Mr. Wiggin: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that at the end of my speech last Friday, for which he was present, I told the House that because of the Bill's complexity, some right hon. and hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman, may not understand it and that I would make myself available to answer any questions and to explain the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman was present to hear that invitation, and as he is clearly concerned about the Bill, why has he not done me the courtesy of approaching me for an explanation?

Mr. Skinner: I do not usually get involved in those usual channels—if I start that game, I am finished. If the hon. Gentleman cares to look in *Hansard*, he will find that on the last occasion that the Bill was debated, I mentioned a letter that I received from the Consumers Association. It wrote to other right hon. and hon. Members also, with the information that the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare did not consult the Consumers Association when drawing up the Bill or devising appropriate amendments. The hon. Gentleman heard me read into *Hansard* that letter, in which the association said that it had been let down in consultation on the Bill. The hon. Gentleman should be careful with his loose talk about people who have followed the Bill closely. I was asked by the Consumers Association to speak on the Bill, and I do not normally pick up a letter and say to myself, "I'll write that into *Hansard*." The hon. Gentleman gave the impression that he had consulted various bodies throughout Britain.

Mr. Wiggin: No, only those that approached me.

Mr. Skinner: The association of which I speak is headed by some "Lady quango", or used to be, and is connected with the magazine "*Which?*".

Mr. Soames: Does the hon. Gentleman, with his knowledge of these matters, acknowledge that it is possible that the Government lawyers who helped my hon. Friend draft his Bill may themselves have consulted the Consumers Association without my hon. Friend knowing? The Bill deals with such a technical area that the Government would obviously wish to assist my hon. Friend. It is likely that the Consumers Association was consulted on this, as on other matters, by the Government.

Mr. Skinner: Can the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) be sure what lawyers are up to any day of the week?

Mr. Soames: No.

Mr. Skinner: Right, so we are on decent ground there. It is clear that most right hon. and hon. Members agree on that—except those who are themselves lawyers, and there are plenty of them. We know that the lawyers are now very much at war. I notice that on the Tory Benches in particular, the solicitors no longer sit with the barristers as a result of the Lord Chancellor's proposals. They can be seen pulling faces at one another. The Prime Minister as well has stirred that up.

Mr. Wiggin: What does that have to do with clause 2?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman said that clause 2 was drafted with the help of Government lawyers. What kind of lawyers? Were they lawyers who are on the side of the Lord Chancellor, or lawyers on the side of Lord Hailsham—who is making scathing comments about the Prime Minister and about the Grantham grocer-shop mentality? What kind of Government lawyers were they? Is there a split among Government lawyers? Can we trust what they are up to nowadays? Is one set of lawyers trying to put down another set of lawyers? What guarantee is there that lawyers who go into the Box are not on one side or the other? Once mistrust has been sown, we shall not know what the next move will be. Can we trust any Bill? Can we trust the way in which clause 2 has been drawn up?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I have not been in the Chamber very long, but I refer to a point over which my hon. Friend passed rather quickly a few moments ago, as to whether the Bill fully applies to Scotland, and what will be the legal interpretation in the event of some parts of Scotland using old weights and measures. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, the Bill is a form of privatisation. Does my hon. Friend think that the Bill represents a return to the days before equal weight and measures applied thoughout the whole country, which were introduced so that poor people would know that a pound of potatoes meant a pound of potatoes anywhere in the country?

Mr. Barron: And a baker's dozen meant 13, as well.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Bill represent a return to a local form of privatisation and regulation? I think that my hon. Friend would agree that that would be to the disadvantage of poor people who buy things in small quantities and very much to the advantage of merchants and traders, who would be in a position to decide on the local weight or measure according to the amount of profit that they could make.

[Mr. Corbyn]

I realise that this is a difficult question, but I should like my hon. Friend to answer it, and also to say how he thinks that the lawyers would deal with the problem, divided as they are at present on so many other issues.

10.30 am

Mr. Skinner: If I were to answer that I should want a lawyer and legal aid, because it would take a long time. I am not sure that I could get legal aid, however, because this is a well-paid job: we all agree on that. Some of us believe that we are well paid, anyway, although some hon. Members may think that they are poorly paid. We do not need moonlighting jobs on the side to supplement our income.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I think that there is a lawyer in the House.

Mr. Waller: I should like the right of reply, Mr. Walker. I plead not guilty on that count.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in this instance the lawyers do not count as much as those who are responsible for enforcing the law—that is, the trading standards officers? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, of which I have the honour to be a vice-president, is agreeable to the provisions in the Bill? The institute was consulted, and amendments that it suggested have been incorporated. It does not consider that its interests are at stake; indeed, it wants the Bill to go further, and looks to my hon. Friend the Minister to introduce legislation in accordance with the representations of the Eden committee. It would be extremely disappointed if the Bill did not make progress today.

Mr. Skinner: Who said that the Bill would not make progress? We have got to examine it thoroughly. It is no use leaving it to the lawyers when it leaves this place. It is no use thinking, "Well, it went through on the nod. The Members of Parliament had a nice cushy Friday. The debate only lasted for an hour, and the Members of Parliament went off to listen to the results of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. They were not bothered about giving the Bill proper scrutiny." We want to know what is meant by some of the references in clause 2, and we are not going to leave it to the lawyers. Some of us know that they are in business only to make a lot of money out of it.

I will tell the House why I am keen on making sure that the Bill is scrutinised properly, even if it is passed. Let me remind hon. Members what happened the other week. The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) may have been here: he usually comes in to—in quotes—filibuster on a Friday. When I saw him today I thought, "Hullo, here he is. Here is the backstop man. He is the bloke who comes in at about 2 pm and puts an end to the proceedings." He has done it several times on various issues: I do not know why.

What happened the other week was that a Bill had the wrong title. The Government lawyers had brought in a Bill to repeal the Clean Air Act when it should have been "amend". I remember that the hon. Member for Keighley was present. He was going to introduce his Bill that day, but then he went: he bobbied off. He went for an early bath, and mind the showers on the way out.

When we discovered that well-paid Government lawyers had actually got the title of the Bill wrong, we had to amend it. We told the hon. Gentleman in charge of it to sort it out. That was a valuable exercise in scrutiny and examination.

The Chairman: Order. I hope that eventually the hon. Gentleman will get round to discussing whether clause 2 should stand part of this Bill.

Mr. Skinner: I was asked to explain why a Bill drawn up by and with the help of Government lawyers and handed to a Back Bencher should be other than perfect. In your capacity as Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Walker, you will know only too well the importance of being careful to read the small print, and this morning we are into the small print.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman said that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley had come in to filibuster——

Mr. Skinner: In quotes.

Mr. Soames: That is most unfair. My hon. Friend is known on the Conservative Benches as a legislative humane killer. From time to time, because he happens to be here to deal with important parliamentary matters, my hon. Friend considers it his duty to come into the Chamber and examine closely and in detail private Members' Bills requiring the kind of scrutiny that would not take place if the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—and I pay tribute to him—were not present on most Fridays. If he were not here, the most pernicious legislation would slip through on the nod. My hon. Friend, along with the hon. Member for Bolsover, is called on from time to time to administer the coup de grace.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of a split among the lawyers, and speculated on what kind of lawyers might have drafted the clause. If the lawyers who drafted the clause had the interests of the consumer at heart, they would have been supporters of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor; if, however, they were supporters of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Hailsham, they would not have been interested in consumers' rights.

I think that the hon. Gentleman can take some comfort from the fact that those lawyers will have consulted the Consumers Association, and will be interested in consumers' rights. The hon. Gentleman should give more credit to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare, who would not allow such an important piece of legislation to be introduced unless he was satisfied that it could withstand the closest scrutiny of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is actually saying that there are some devious lawyers. That is what he is saying, in a nutshell. He may have said it in a posh Tory fashion, but that is what he means. He means that there are devious, cool, calculating, desiccated, machine-like lawyers who are only in it for the money, and some of them are close to the Government. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman realises that he has put his foot in it—and it is a big foot.

The hon. Gentleman has said that there are some dodgy lawyers who support Lord Hailsham and others, whom he regards as clean, who support the Prime Minister. He admits that people in both camps are not only to be found among Members of Parliament—although a lot are: I think that at the last count there were about 70 of one kind or another. There are not many here this morning, though. Of course, the courts are still open, and they cannot be here and in the courts at the same time.

It is difficult for lawyers on Fridays. If they are making £30,000 or £40,000 a year as lawyers——

Mr. Soames: A week.

Mr. Skinner: I was trying to be fair. But perhaps the hon. Gentleman can prove that some of them are lining their pockets to that extent at the same time as drawing up clause 2 of the Bill. Perhaps he can prove that they are getting their snouts into that kind of trough—I will not call it pig swill; that kind of money cannot be called pig swill.

The hon. Gentleman is closer to the heart of Government than any other hon. Member present today, apart from the Minister. *[Interruption.]* Well, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the number three pairing Whip, is pretty close. But the hon. Member for Crawley is PPS to the Secretary of State for the Environment. Did he get his information from the Secretary of State? What he has said this morning could well be an admission of what is stirring in the breast of the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps there is a Ridley plan mark 3 to cause real trouble among the lawyers. We may see that in the course of 1991.

The Chairman: Order. A clause that deals with the passing and stamping of equipment by authorised persons does not lend itself to a debate on the terms and conditions of employment for lawyers. I think that we should get back to clause 2.

Mr. Skinner: I am making the serious point that if Government lawyers—beset by all their worries and troubles and infighting—could bring to this House the other week a Bill whose title was wrong, we have to do something about it. They wanted to sweep away the Clean Air Act. We stopped them. We did a service to the country, as always.

If Government lawyers, who are involved in all this infighting between themselves, solicitors versus barristers, are sending Bills to the House on Friday mornings—including the Clean Air Act which they wanted to repeal instead of amend, which we had to do in the end—I have to ask myself, especially when the hon. Member for Crawley says that he agrees that there is trouble among them, "Can I be satisfied with clause 2 of the Bill? Who drew it up? Was it a solicitor? Was it a barrister? Was it a solicitor who hoped to be a barrister? Was it a solicitor who hopes to be a barrister under the new régime, or was it a solicitor who hopes to be a barrister but who wants to retain the status quo? What motivated the lawyer who drew up clause 2 and then handed the Bill to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare? What was in his or her mind?" We need to know. That is the question that needs to be answered this Friday morning.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I am almost sorry that I am here, as I am a lawyer. I think that I am the only lawyer in the House. I can only assume that all the others are doing precisely what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said that they are doing. I apologise for the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) is not here. I am sorry that she is not here and she will be sorry, too, when I speak to her next week. She has been unavoidably detained on very important business in the north.

Looking at clause 2 as a lawyer, is it not clear that it is no friend of the consumer? The explanatory memorandum and subsection (4) of clause 2 make it clear that faulty equipment could still be passed, not by inspectors but by authorised people, whoever they may be. The Bill—clause 2 in particular—is seeking to privatise the inspection of equipment and to allow shoddy equipment to be passed. For that reason, the Bill deserves to be opposed. In particular, clause 2 should not stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend, who is a Scottish lawyer and who has still not been given an answer to his question as to whether the Bill applies to Scotland, has put his finger on another important flaw in clause 2: who will inspect and test faulty equipment? Does it mean that the Government—who have done 19 different fiddles of the unemployment figures, who are now fiddling the cost of living figures, who are threatening to fiddle the balance of payment figures and who are threatening to fiddle the inflation figures by leaving out mortgage interest relief—are going to do yet another fiddle? The Government live by fiddles. They are run by what have been described as bent lawyers. Does the Bill mean that we shall have equipment that can fiddle as well?

Mr. Buchan: I have been ruminating on my hon. Friend's barristers versus solicitors argument. The point about a barrister or a solicitor, or a solicitor wishing to be a barrister, is that both get the lolly. The solicitor briefs the barrister; he gets paid for doing the briefing. The barrister gets paid for explaining the brief. Both of them are at it. It is a double fiddle. Does my hon. Friend see the point?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I know that that is the game. That is why this important debate is taking place. However, I do not believe that it will ever happen. I hope that I am helping some of the lawyers when I say that changing the relationship between solicitors and barristers is just a publicity stunt by the Prime Minister. I do not think that she has the nerve to carry it through. The judges, who were going to go on strike at the Royal Courts of Justice the other day, decided to call it off when the Prime Minister gave in. Some people thought that the judges had backed down, but they did not. The Prime Minister gave in. The jury is still out on that question.

Mr. Barron: On the question of the drafting of clause 2 by lawyers, it is a question not of personalities in the other place but whether one is a member of the Bar Council or the Law Society. If the White Paper ever leads to legislation, what it contains will depend on who drafts the clauses of the next employment Bill. That will show who is the victor in the argument.

10.45 am

Mr. Skinner: There is no doubt that infighting is taking place and that we shall have to scrutinise Bills more carefully. We do not know what the motives are. When they get up in the morning we cannot be sure whether they say, "I think I'll draft a Bill for the Government today that will make them look up when I've finished with it for

[Mr. Skinner]

having caused all that trouble—for having set the Lord Chancellor going with this new idea of undermining my living standards. I'll have to move from Henley and sell up."

What goes through their heads when they sit down at their desks and somebody says, "Emergency! We need a Bill, quick, for Friday morning. We need it to be drafted quickly to pass to a Back Bencher. We need to give the impression that this is a private Member's Bill when in reality it is a Government Bill. Get it done quick." The solicitor says, "Huh, you want me to pull out all the stops. This Tory Government want me to get stuck in all day on it and draw up clause 2 of the Bill. I'll cause some trouble. They're not going to upset me. They won't stop me becoming a barrister and making all those big fat fees. They're not going to cause all that trouble. I'm going to draw up clause 2 in a fashion that makes it unworkable. I know what I'll do. I'll draw up a clause 2 in which I say that anybody can inspect faulty equipment. That will cause some trouble. Someone on the Labour Benches will spot that."

Mr. Barron: Or any barrow boy.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, or any barrow boy, but let us get that into perspective. Barrow boys are as good as solicitors. I would say that they are better than solicitors.

Mr. Darling: Is my hon. Friend saying that they are both a bit shifty?

Mr. Skinner: No. I am saying that they are both in the business of selling, so we ought not to go too far down that road. In the elections yesterday I think that we got more votes than barrow boys and solicitors in some areas of Britain. It was a pretty good day in Derbyshire. We won a seat, not far from me, from the Tories. It was supposed to be an independent seat, but we know the score. We won a glorious victory in Brackenfield; part of it is in my constituency. Some lawyers voted for us who might be of the kind who would draft clause 2. Who knows? They were so disenchanted with the Government who had introduced this new divisive element into the legal fraternity that, word has it, of the few lawyers in the Bolsover area, almost all of them voted for us. So we had a pretty spectacular victory in Brackenfield.

Mr. Waller: In view of the hon. Gentleman's obviously well-founded doubts about lawyers, about whom he has spoken for some time, was it not rash of him to adopt without question the advice that was given to him by his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) who is a self-confessed Scottish lawyer? His hon. Friend's advice was that clause 2 reduces the rights of the consumer. That clause, however, is designed to remove from trading standards officers purely routine tasks that could be carried out by anybody in order to ensure that trading standards officers can protect the rights of consumers who are under attack from a whole range of rogues.

Mr. Skinner: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman believes that. I think that he is making a point on behalf of the promoters of the Bill. Let us be fair. Let us imagine that we are in a grocer's shop in Grantham with a weighing machine——

Mr. Barron: It has closed down.

Mr. Skinner: It is a cafe now; it is called the Premier Cafe. Let us go back two or three decades. When the Prime Minister used to serve behind the counter she used to use a weighing machine. Probably an inspector called every so often.

Mr. Wiggin: He still will.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, but he could be anybody. That is why the law has been relaxed. When the Prime Minister was weighing out the dolly mixtures, if it went overweight she used to cut the dolly mixtures in half rather than give too much. She used to cut the heads of the jelly babies. If somebody came in the shop for two ounces of jelly babies, if they were just a touch over the weight, off came their heads. When the Prime Minister sliced the bacon, one could see through it.

It is easy to use the equipment in a faulty fashion. It only takes one tinpot inspector who is interested in making a small fortune from fiddling to come along and say, "I have inspected the equipment under clause 2 of the Bill drawn up by those dodgy lawyers, who produced it when they were so frustrated with the threat to their livelihood posed by the Prime Minister."

The Bill was born out of frustration and a degree of devilment, and, as a result, faulty weighing machines will probably carry out measurements in the Common Market. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South referred to that earlier when he spoke about having to measure in ecus rather than using old-fashioned British measurements. There are foreign lawyers in the Common Market. What will they do with the Bill? They will say, "Have you heard about the Bill that they have passed over in Britain? We have just received a copy of it." They will say that it is cock-eyed—I do not know the French or German for that —but they will say, "This is a tidy old Bill".

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) has just come in. He is a Liberal lawyer. He has come here to lick his wounds. Some of his colleagues have been asked to go on television to explain why the Liberals, or whatever they are called, lost so many seats yesterday. They cannot get Paddy to go on television. He will not appear in order to explain. It is a good job that the hon. and learned Gentleman has come in here as we are discussing whether lawyers, frustrated with the threat that has been posed to their livelihood by the Lord Chancellor's new proposals, would draw up for the Government to pass to Back Benchers Bills that are a little bit dodgy. The hon. and learned Gentleman is a lawyer. What does he think? Could they be so worked up and frustrated that they will say, "We will cause the Government some trouble if they threaten our livelihood."?

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that the Government's legislative record on these matters is so poor that they are well capable of creating legislation that gives more work to lawyers without lawyers offering any assistance in that regard.

Mr. Skinner: I reckon that that was a legal answer. I do not know what the hon. and learned Gentleman would charge for that outside this place.

Mr. Campbell: Two hundred and fifty guineas.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. and learned Gentleman would charge 250 guineas for that advice. I have been giving advice on the Bill all morning, with a briefing from the Consumers Association in my hand because it is against the Bill. I shall read it out because people in Britain have a right to know why the Bill is defective as it has been drawn up by dodgy Government lawyers.

The Secretary of State for Health has just entered the Chamber. He is another lawyer. Perhaps we shall find out what he thinks. Will the lawyer on the Government Front Bench tell us whose side he is on? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman take the side of those who support the Lord Chancellor, or does he take the side of those who support Lord Hailsham? Does he have a view of his own? Dare he speak his mind? He should tell us today whether he is in the Prime Minister's pocket. What does he say to her in the Cabinet? Has he the guts to speak out? Does he agree with the Secretary of State for Wales about our economic problems? The lawyer who has just entered the Chamber should answer all those questions so that we can find out whether the Bill has been drawn up properly.

The Consumers Association, the publishers of *Which?* magazine, has a longstanding reputation in Britain for its reports. Those reports are based on intensive research, and when Radio 4's "Today" and "PM" programmes say that *Which?* has produced a report on something, people sit up and take notice. The Consumers Association has produced a report on the Bill and the first paragraph reads:

"Although this Bill appears uncontroversial"—

that is, the Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill, and clause 2 in particular—

"it does in fact overturn basic measures of consumer protection which have been taken for granted for over 100 years. The Consumers Association urgently requests your support in opposing this Bill."

That is what I am doing today.

Mr. Buchan: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the fact that we have only just discovered that the Bill, through the smuggling out of another Bill, suddenly confronts us. We have to start finding our way though the labyrinths of the Bill, and only now, through the Government's non-response, do we realise the iniquity of the Bill. Now, we are confronted with a proper analysis and know that the Bill that was to be smuggled through under the pretence that it was a private Member's Bill was a Government Bill handed to a Back Bencher. Another private Member's Bill was whipped out of the way for it and the Government hope that they will smuggle it through. Is that not what has happened this morning? I came in here by chance to say that there is something fishy about the Bill. We asked some questions, and before an hour had passed we received a briefing from the Consumers Association defending the people of this country saying that the Bill should be opposed. The Government have been caught in a labyrinthine net of their own contrivance and it is up to the House to throw it out with contempt. We have a job on our hands, but it shall be done.

Mr. Skinner: More people are listening to the debate now. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South came in early this morning.

Mr. Buchan: Alone.

Mr. Skinner: I quickly followed him. A Bill was being smuggled through the House and Members of Parliament should understand what is happening.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has just entered the Chamber. No doubt he has been busy on television and radio. The right hon. Gentleman who is sitting next to me, and who suffered defeat in yesterday's local elections should know that the Bill was drawn up by Government lawyers, some of whom were fed up to the back teeth with the way that the Government are treating them. They have produced a dodgy Bill and passed it to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare, who used to be a Minister and now has little or nothing to do apart from manning the Agriculture Select Committee and being trampled on by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on occasions. I think that they said, "We feel sorry for Jerry" because he is supposed to be one of the knights of the shires, "Can we give Jerry a leg-up?" We have a Bill on the shelf. It is about weights and measures. It is about allowing the manufacturers of weights and measures equipment to sell faulty equipment more easily because the Bill will allow inspectors who might not even be inspectors." They could be frustrated lawyers running away from the Lord Chancellor. The Government say to the frustrated Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture, "Jerry, you will only have to come in on the occasional Friday and smuggle through the Bill." Those were the words used by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South. The Government are occupying a private Members' day with their own Bills. We found them out the other week. Instead of authentic private Members' Bills that are drawn in the top six in the ballot, the Government, together with some of the Whips, are passing their Bills on to Tory Back Benchers and telling them to smuggle them through because nobody——

It being Eleven o'clock, and MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER'S *intention to interrupt proceedings pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings) having been made known,* THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair, without Question put.*

Committee report Progress and ask leave to sit again.

General Practitioners (Contract)

11 am

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the family doctors' contract.

I am glad to be able to tell the House that, late last night after prolonged discussions, I reached agreement with Dr. Michael Wilson the chairman of the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association and his negotiating colleagues on all the major outstanding issues involved in the new contract proposed for family doctors. I now expect a contract on the lines agreed to be introduced for family doctors throughout Great Britain with effect from 1 April 1990. My Department is now preparing a new statement of fees and allowances and regulations for consultation on minor details with representatives of the profession and I will lay the regulations in their final form before the House in due course.

The new contract will introduce new performance bonus payments for those doctors who reach the Government's targets of 90 per cent. coverage for childhood immunisation and 80 per cent. coverage for screening for cervical cancer. I have also agreed to introduce new lower-rate bonus payments of one third of the full rate for those doctors who attain 70 per cent. for immunisation and 50 per cent. cover for cervical cancer screening.

The negotiators have agreed my proposal that the fee paid where a night visit is made by a doctor from the patient's own practice should be three times the fee paid when the visit is made by a deputy.

To meet representations put to me on behalf of doctors in small practices, I have agreed that the higher fee for night visits should also be paid when the visit is made by a doctor from a small rota of local general practitioners, so long as the rota does not include more than 10 practitioners.

I had originally proposed that the new contract should require GPs to be available to patients for 20 hours each week in surgery. To meet representations put to me by rural doctors in particular, I have now agreed that the terms of service will require GPs to be available for 26 hours on average over five days each week and that this will include availability in surgery, health promotion clinics and for home visits. In recognition of the work that some GPs do elsewhere on health-related activities in the public service, for example in community hospitals, this commitment can be reduced to four days in individual cases subject to agreement with the family practitioner committee.

The GMSC and I have always agreed that additional payments should be made to rural practitioners and that the present system of rural practice payments needed to be updated. We have not yet agreed on the fairest method, but we are confident that we will be able to do so. We agreed last night that work on revising the scheme would be taken out of the present negotiations and considered by the central advisory committee on rural practice payments.

We also reached mutually satisfactory agreements on minor surgery, seniority payments, the basic practice allowance, funds for practice teams and premises and new higher capitation payments for GPs serving deprived areas.

We also agreed to submit joint evidence to the doctors and dentists review body about pricing the new contract in such a way as to meet the Government's policy objective for the general medical services in that the joint evidence would refer to the profession's acceptance of the Government's intention that the proportion of the remuneration of GPs arising from capitation based payments will reach 60 per cent. from 1 April 1990.

There were large areas of the new contract on which we had always been in agreement with the profession. I am glad to say, therefore, that, for example, the proposed new payments for surveillance of young children and the new higher capitation payments for patients over the age of 75 with whom doctors retain close contact were never at any time the subject of controversy between us.

The negotiators undertook to commend last night's agreement to the profession for implementation with effect from 1 April 1990.

This agreement is a very significant step in the development of the family doctor service in our National Health Service. The new contract will be very different from the old one. It will ensure that the highest rewards go to the most hard-working doctors and that incentives and rewards are given to those who introduce new services and hit high standards of performance. I think that the negotiators and I are agreed that it provides the foundation for significant further improvements in the quality of primary health care for all our NHS patients.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): We welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has made what we hope will be the first of many U-turns—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the negotiations have never been about how much is put from the public purse into general practice but rather about how that money from the public purse is to be distributed? Therefore, his comments about general practitioners feeling for their wallets were deeply offensive and unnecessary. Will he now apologise for the thuggish way he has conducted the negotiations?

Does the Secretary of State recognise that many believe that his aggressive style during the negotiations was a deliberate ploy to distract from doctors' opposition to the White Paper and to muddle in the public mind the issues of the White Paper and those of the contract? Will he guarantee that the cash limits for general practice ancillary staff and premises, which were set up under the Health and Medicines Act 1988, will not be so low as to prevent doctors from achieving the screening and prevention targets that are to be put into the new contract?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise the widespread concern about giving disproportionate financial incentives to doctors to increase their list size when patients get better care if doctors have more time for each patient? Will he guarantee that he will keep a close eye on how the capitation element works in practice and take action if it creeps above 60 per cent.? Will he recognise that the row that he has been having with the doctors will be as nothing compared to the wholesale opposition from the profession and the public to his plans to destroy the NHS?

Mr. Clarke: Like my hon. Friends, I found the hon. Lady's opening remarks somewhat surprising. If she now supports the contract as agreed last night, the most amazing U-turn has been performed by the Opposition.

The contract as agreed reflects the performance targets and higher capitation levels on which the Government have always insisted. We have agreed with the profession a reasonable package which meets its requirements and those of the many doctors who have made representations to us on the details of how we achieve the Government's aims in the contract. The profession is now satisfied that we are pursuing the aims we were always pursuing in a practicable and sensible way.

I shall quote myself in full since the hon. Lady referred to my remarks about doctors feeling for their wallets. I said that I wished that the more suspicious doctors would stop feeling for their wallets whenever I mentioned the word "reform". I said that because the first reactions to my proposals were that many doctors, quite unreasonably, believed that somehow we were aiming to cut their incomes as soon as we started talking about a contract. We have now satisfied all doctors that there was never a threat to the overall level of general practitioners' incomes and that we were merely seeking to reward those who work hardest and hit the highest standards under the contract. Now that we have satisfied the negotiators of the GMSC on that point, I trust that the rest of the medical profession will be readily reassured.

I agree entirely that it is right to stop muddling up the contract for the remuneration of general practitioners with the White Paper reforms. The GMSC agrees with us about that. The issues have been muddled in recent campaigning. Many people have interpreted general practitioners' concern over the details of their contracts as fundamental opposition to our aims. The BMA negotiators last night agreed that they share our aims as set out in the foreword to the NHS review. They accept that we should aim to achieve a better service for patients. As we discussed matters fruitfully last night, I trust that we shall be able to do so on the White Paper and pursue our common aims in agreed ways as we develop our proposals for new methods of running the Health Service. I gave assurances yesterday about cash limits for ancillary services and said that we would honour commitments that we gave in passing the Health and Medicines Act 1988.

I do not accept that our measures are a drive towards bigger lists. We are agreed about increasing capitation, and it helps to improve the quality of service if those who work hard are rewarded and doctors are encouraged to attract and retain their patients. Above all, list sizes will be determined by whether patients are attracted and retained by services, and, of course, they will not wish to go to a doctor who is too busy to see them.

The agreement clears the way for more constructive discussion on the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients". I welcome the improvement in atmosphere that I am sure will result from our agreement. The bulk of the medical profession wants to join us in discussing the details of how we implement the Government's agreed aims to improve the Health Service for British patients.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): The fact that this long-running business of settling the new contract has been concluded satisfactorily will give much satisfaction and pleasure to Conservative Members and people outside the House. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on sticking firmly to the underlying aim and thrust behind the contract—to improve pay for those doctors who work hardest. My right hon. and learned Friend has never wavered, and there is no question of any U-turn. We admire him for always accommodating the BMA when it has asked for meetings over the past months. Some women doctors appeared to think that the way in which the contract was developing would disadvantage their opportunities within the profession. Will he reassure me that that is not so?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend knows as well as I that this has been a long-running subject. I share her relief that the long negotiations have at last come to an end with the agreed settlement. I thank her for her remarks, which are well worth bearing in mind as we proceed with the White Paper proposals for the reform of the Health Service. We must stick determinedly to our aim of improving the service, but we will be prepared to discuss with representatives of the profession, in as much detail as they want, how the aims can be achieved, and I think that last night was a good omen.

I have received many representations about women doctors. Although some of the fears that were expressed were misplaced, we endeavoured to ease the problems in our discussions last night. When my hon. Friend studies the details of the agreement, she will note that the change of basing payments from personal lists back to practice lists, and some of the changes that we made to the basic practice allowance, were designed to meet, among other things, the fear that we might accidentally deter women doctors from being admitted into partnerships.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I welcome the fact that agreement has been reached, not least because it shows that the Secretary of State now accepts that doctors, especially rural doctors, had real and substantial fears. I suspect that, on mature reflection, he may consider that the observation about doctors reaching for their wallets should not have been made. Will he clarify the protection that will be given to inner-city doctors, given the transient nature of their lists, which makes it more difficult not only to increase lists but to meet targets? In his statement, he referred to "Great Britain". Does last night's agreement supersede the draft contract issued to Scottish general practitioners by the Scottish Office Minister with responsibilities for health?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it is important to give increased capitation payments to rural doctors and those who work in deprived areas, and both those groups were discussed yesterday. Both sides are agreed on the aim for rural doctors, but cannot agree on the method. Each side believes that the proposal that it is putting forward is fairer to rural doctors than the competing method. I have agreed that the matter should be referred to the specialist committee to decide how the current arrangements should be revised—we both agree that they should be revised—and in the meantime the current system will continue, which will reassure doctors north and south of the border.

We are introducing new higher capitation payments for those who work in inner-city areas. We are agreed on the basic principle of how to make the higher payments using an index known as the Jarman index. We have agreed to hold further discussions on precisely which areas will be covered. The choice is whether we have a high addition concentrated on few areas or whether it should be spread more widely over deprived districts.

[Mr. Clarke]

This is a Great Britain agreement, and Scottish and Welsh negotiators were present yesterday. The agreement will apply to England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I join in extending congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend on the diligence and patience with which he conducted the negotiations and the success that has crowned them. There has been much confusion between the contract and the White Paper, for which the profession must accept some responsibility. What will be the mechanics of explaining to doctors what has been agreed so that there will be no future misunderstandings? Does he agree that if reasonable men can reach agreement on the contract, it should be perfectly possible to reach understanding in discussions on the working papers that accompanied the White Paper, which worked towards ends that surely all of us share—the best possible National Health Service, which is in the interests of professionals, politicians and patients?

Mr. Clarke: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Rather perversely, I enjoy prolonged negotiations, which obviously goes back to my murky past as a lawyer. These were quite the most difficult and longest negotiations in which I have taken part since those that I had with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury about the greatly increased money for the Health Service this year. As we agreed that we shall spend it ever more wisely, the two are closely related.

My hon. Friend's point about explaining the mechanics to doctors is extremely important. I shall consider as rapidly as possible how I can most quickly communicate with all general practitioners so that they are aware of what has been agreed on their behalf. That is a great weakness in the Health Service, which gives rise to needless controversy. Half the people who work in it have no direct access to clear information about what is being proposed and done. The result is that they rely for a lot of their information on strange articles in specialist journals and leafleteering, which gives rise to unnecessary concern.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the agreement admirably demonstrates how the profession and the Government, who are both firmly committed to improving the National Health Service, can agree on details as long as we are prepared to thrash them out.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): The Secretary of State made it clear that the issue of rural practice payments has been referred to the central advisory committee. Will he clarify when he expects such negotiations to be completed, because it is of particular interest to areas such as mine and throughout the Highlands and Islands of Scotland? It would be helpful if he gave an indication of the time scale that is envisaged.

The Secretary of State will be aware that many women doctors work part time. If the basic practice allowance is not to be made available to those with lists of fewer than 400 patients, has he estimated how many women GPs might be excluded from receipt of that payment?

Mr. Clarke: I cannot say how long it will take for negotiations to be completed, but we shall ask the committee to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. There is no difference of principle between us, and it probably requires the assistance of the specialist committee to work out the methodology and how we should revise and bring up to date the present arrangements.

As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Egbaston (Dame Jill Knight), we have made significant changes to meet the fears expressed by women doctors. I do not think that the new contract will deter the taking on of women partners. Indeed, it recognises to a greater extent than before concepts such as job sharing and being a full principal with a part-time commitment.

The ever-growing interest in matters such as female screening for cancer will make women practitioners more attractive to partnerships because we are giving incentives for high performance in that part of medicine. Partly in response to the worries of female doctors, we have moved to the basic practice levels first set out in the proposed Scottish contract. We have put the rural matter on one side because of the fears of rural doctors north and south of the border and in order to seek a sensible agreement.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I, too, congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on a settlement that everyone will welcome with relief and I congratulate him also on his healing words. Is he aware that two conclusions can be drawn? First, my right hon. and learned Friend is the antithesis of the fool and the knave that he has been portrayed as by the medical profession. Secondly, the unscrupulous use of the fears of the old and the sick which has been undertaken by general practitioners, certainly in my constituency, turns out to be little more than a bargaining ploy in these contractual negotiations. Will my right hon. and learned Friend therefore be even more determined to press on with his National Health Service improvements, despite what opposition may be set up by the now discredited general practitioners?

Mr. Clarke: I was not going to return to some of the topics on which my hon. and learned Friend has touched, but I note his views.

Certainly, on occasions, hard words have been exchanged. It is my experience—I am now in my second stint at the Department of Health—that medical politics is no place for the squeamish. They are never conducted on the same restrained level as matters of war and peace and other issues in British politics. I am glad to say that it has been my experience that agreement can be reached in the end and that, after a dispute is over, people appear to forget it entirely and no one can quite remember what the fuss was all about. That is likely to happen on this occasion.

My hon. and learned Friend is not the only person to feel that some of the points aimed at patients, as opposed to those aimed at me, were perhaps unwise. No doubt, he will make inquiries about what is proposed to be done about the 11 million leaflets that were published as part of the recent campaign.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Secretary of State will know of the critical reception given by doctors in the London borough of Newham to his proposals. Although this is a separate matter, will he give a guarantee that general practice will not become a cash-limited service and that there will be no compulsion for doctors to become budget holders?

Mr. Clarke: I can give the hon. Gentleman the first assurance that he seeks. There are no proposals in our

White Paper to make the family doctor service cash limited, as he puts it. We have made it clear that practice budgets are open to GPs who want them. Those who expressed an interest in them will discuss the details and negotiate the size of the budget before contemplating whether to go on.

Drug budgets remain an important issue which we must settle. They will be indicative drug budgets, which means that there will be an indication of what the doctor should spend and, if he overspends, he will have to justify that to another doctor and explain his clinical practice. The important point about drug budgets from the point of view of the people of Newham and elsewhere is that there is nothing in our proposals that will ever lead to any difficulties for patients. There is certainly no question of any patient ever being refused the medicine that he or she needs because of anything that the Government have proposed or anything else in the offing for the Health Service.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Following this welcome outbreak of sanity in the BMA, and now that the doctors' wage claim has been settled on terms which are basically the same as those originally proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend, which they said would prove so disastrous, may we expect to hear less from the BMA in the way of hysterical and untruthful assertions about the effects of the contract and the NHS reforms, which have worried so many of our patients and some of our doctors in such an unnecessary and wicked way?

Mr. Clarke: I must be fair to Michael Wilson and his colleagues who, along with my team and me, worked hard to reach a sensible package and an agreement. At the end, we parted on extremely good terms, both sides believing that we had improved the relationship between us. I share my hon. Friend's hope that that will continue and that we shall continue to discuss in the same spirit other matters arising out of the NHS White Paper that have been made more contentious than they need be. I am sure that the average member of the public cannot understand how such a highly qualified profession as the doctors can get into a dispute with the Government when we all agree that we are entirely agreed on the policy's objectives.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): In view of what has been said by Conservative Members, will the Secretary of State accept this point? In my contacts with general practitioners in my constituency, both personally and through letters, no one has brought up the issue of the contract. It is not in dispute and has not been in the BMA's leaflets. The only time that I had a conversation about the contract was last Monday, the bank holiday, when my family doctor called at my home because one of my children was sick, and that conversation was about reaching set targets for cervical cancer screening. In my district health authority area women can go to a general practitioner, a family planning clinic or an out-patient service provided by the local health service. Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman discussed in detail the setting of these targets and collection of statistics showing whether those targets are being met? That is important, in view of the complicated arrangements that exist, certainly within my district health authority.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman contradicts himself. Targets for screening for cervical cancer were an issue in the contract. The Government always stated our aim that four out of five at-risk women should be screened against cervical cancer because it is an unnecessary and avoidable form of death for many women. We were able yesterday finally to agree that the Government's aim of 80 per cent. cover for cervical cancer screening was a sensible target to set. The change that I made was to introduce a new lower target of one third of the value of the full one for doctors who were not able to get immediately to the 80 per cent. target, but were able to get to 50 per cent. or more. I am sure that what we agreed last night will raise the level of screening and protect more women than would otherwise have been protected from the risk of death from cervical cancer.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Without apportioning blame, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there has been an imperfect understanding by doctors of our proposals for their contract and of our proposals in the White Paper? Will my right hon. and learned Friend now do two things? First, will he communicate directly with GPs about the terms of the agreement that he reached yesterday and which we all welcome so warmly? Secondly, will he ensure that, in the continuing discussions about the implementation of the White Paper and the genuine exchange of views that is taking place, where necessary the Government will communicate directly with those doctors whose co-operation and assistance in his reforms are essential?

Mr. Clarke: I welcome my hon. Friend's advice and share the views that lie behind it. I caused to be sent to every GP, for the first time ever, copies of our contract proposals as they then stood. We have not moved away from those aims in what we have agreed today. When the leafleting campaign started, I sent every GP an explanation of my reply to the allegations in the leaflet. Unfortunately, I do not think that my communications are the sole source of information for doctors. I attribute no malice to anyone, but I think that often doctors do not read what they regard as mail coming from the Department. Many comments about what we were doing soon came flowing in from newspapers, other commentators and, dare I say, Opposition spokesmen which rapidly gave the impression that, for example, we would force doctors to have enormous practice list sizes. That was a red herring from beginning to end.

I take my hon. Friend's point that we must ensure that these contract details are firmly brought to the attention of GPs. They have been agreed by their negotiators, whom they trust, and I am sure that they will accept their commendation. We have to do a great deal to rebuild the trust of family doctors and to persuade them that we are not threatening their incomes, practices or well-being; we share with them the aim of improving the service.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Has the Secretary of State been so busy declaring war on GPs that he has concluded a disappointing contract for patients? That is particularly true for women, in view of the cervical smear figures that he has provided. The targets of 80 per cent. and, especially, 50 per cent. are too low. If the target for immunisation is 90 per cent., why cannot the target for cervical cancer testing be 90 per cent.? Is not the 50 per cent. figure an abysmal sell-out? That will be the target to which GPs work. Is this happening because te Secretary of State does not give women's health a sufficiently high priority or

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

because he will not give enough money to health authorities to ensure that a computer call and recall system operates properly?

As GPs will have their budgets limited, there is no incentive for them to deal with patients who contract HIV or have AIDS and who will be an expensive cost in budgets in future years. Should not the treatment of patients with HIV now be a subject for their contracts?

Mr. Clarke: I shall consider seriously having the hon. Gentleman with me on future occasions when I am discussing these matters, as he thinks that I have not gone far enough in the targets I have set. A target of 100 per cent., for example, for screening for cervical cancer might be ideal in an ideal world, but the test is voluntary. We all know that some patients will not respond and that others will refuse to have the test—for understandable reasons. We ask the doctors to explain and promote the benefits of the test to their patients. The general medical services committee agreed yesterday that the 80 per cent. target, which the Government thought was reasonable, was correct. The committee also persuaded me that it would be fair to introduce a lower target for practices that find it impossible to achieve 80 per cent. the first time, so GPs will receive one third of the bonus payment if they reach 50 per cent. However, our aim is the same—to raise the level of screening.

We need to consider new services for AIDS patients in using our new powers to draw the cash limits for payments for improvements to premises and practices, especially if there is a need to develop new clinics because there is a particular problem in an area. I agree that AIDS is a growing problem for particular practices in some areas. I am sure that the GMSC and I will continue to address the way in which we help such GPs to deal with this serious problem.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I join hon. Members and people outside in congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend on bringing common sense back into the negotiations. Does that not show that the Government are listening to valid points put by doctors and others? I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will confirm that that foreshadows constructive discussions on the Government's White Paper. Does he agree that whenever the Opposition enter the debate, they only add to the confusion and distress felt by many patients?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that we have been listening carefully to the representations of many hon. Members, who have, in turn, met GPs in their constituencies. Our proposals on rural practices, for example, and some of the changes we have made to the targets strongly reflect representations made to me by my hon. Friends and others in the past few weeks. We will continue to adopt the same approach. We have said throughout that we want constructive discussion on the working papers that we have put out because we intend to work in partnership with the profession in the implementation of the White Paper proposals. It is not for me to comment on the interventions by the Opposition, for which I am not responsible. However, I suspect that they feel a deep sense of disappointment that we have made a significant advance and that the way is now clear for the continued smooth implementation of the White Paper.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): May I press the Secretary of State for a statement on resources? It is all very well to set standards, but unless there are additional resources to carry out testing, such as cervical smears, little will be achieved. The Secretary of State referred to AIDS. As he may know, Edinburgh has a high incidence of AIDS infection. It is not good enough to say that discussions about increased resources for the treatment and detection of patients with AIDS are a matter for the future. We need resources now and we should recognise that there is a growing problem in Edinburgh and it is spreading to the rest of the United Kingdom. What will the Secretary of State do about it? Do we have to wait until the problem arises in London before he realises that AIDS is a real problem?

Mr. Clarke: I said a moment ago that the last prolonged negotiations in which I was engaged were with my colleagues at the Treasury on resources for the National Health Service. The priority that the Government gave to putting extra resources into the Health Service was demonstrated clearly by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury last autumn, when almost £2 billion extra was put into the Health Service. My Department is now the second highest spending Department. We spend more than the Ministry of Defence does—which is more than the Labour party could ever say—and if we carry on as we did last autumn, we shall rapidly catch up the Department of Social Security. This agreement is no substitute for resources. However, we are putting in resources on a scale that no previous Government have ever achieved and we are matching that with new proposals to ensure that the resources provide ever higher quality care.

The Government have put vast resources into research into AIDS and into developing new services north and south of the border. It is true that the problem is at its most acute in Edinburgh and, after Edinburgh, in London. It will be news to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who said that the problem would come to London soon, that it is there now. The Government have one of the best records of any Government in the developed world in responding to the threat of AIDS, both in resources for treatment and in public health education.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I also congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his determination to ensure that the taxpayer gets good value for money and that doctors who conscientiously carry out their duties are rewarded properly. In that regard, he is encouraging doctors to refer as few cases as possible to hospitals, and that must be good both for the practitioners and their patients. Will he shortly introduce a similar contract for consultants, some of whom are giving good service but others of whom are not? That is one of the major reasons for the long waiting lists in some areas.

Mr. Clarke: I do not quite agree with my hon. Friend in the way in which he described our proposals on referrals. Under the new contract, we shall have more information than ever before about the pattern of referrals and we shall find out more about how doctors refer their patients. We want the right use of the hospital service and the right level of referrals. At extremes, some doctors may refer far too many people by referring everybody to the hospital as a way of avoiding decisions themselves. At the other extreme, there may be doctors who do not refer

anybody, even when they should seek specialist advice. All the best GPs would agree that what is required is a good level of clinical practice so that GPs know when they should refer.

Consultants will be affected by the White Paper changes. Districts will have more control over what consultants do by being able to agree with them a job description which can be revised each year. That will help us to ensure that consultants have their efforts directed to the prime needs of patients in the area, which could include tackling waiting lists. Many of our proposals are aimed at ensuring that the whole service is brought up to the standards of the best. That means that we do not have to tolerate indefinitely the fact that waiting lists for similar operations can be enormous in one town, but much lower in another. Part of the reason lies in the system. It needs to be reformed, and in our proposals we are tackling the problem that my hon. Friend has described.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The Secretary of State said that he was looking forward to the continuance of constructive discussions. Does he consider that constructive discussions have been helped by the violent and intemperate language of some of his Back Benchers, who have referred today to the greed of doctors and to evil and wicked behaviour? Will the discussions be helped by his Back Benchers' concentration on the taxpayer rather than the patient? Will the Secretary of State recall that taxpayers are also patients?

Is not the White Paper still under massive questioning by the medical profession? We are pleased that an agreement has been secured which will allow more sensible discussion, but it does not go to the heart of the problem. The White Paper is still pushing in the direction of the private and away from the social. It is still not concentrating on the need for a fully social profession serving the community. The White Paper is still dominated by thoughts of cash. It is time that we thought of health instead.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friends and I have never attacked the medical profession, but it is true that we have attacked——

Mr. Buchan: They have been attacking the profession all morning.

Mr. Clarke: We have attacked vigorously some of the leaflets that have caused needless alarm to patients. The fact that my hon. Friends responded as they did made it clear to people using such leaflets in the campaign that they would not deter the Government from pursuing their aims. It also had the significant effect of persuading everybody that we should have sensible negotiations and that any amount of trying to frighten patients for the purpose of deterring the Government from their policies would not work. I assume that the leaflets are now a matter of the past.

It is a parody to say that the White Paper is concerned primarily with cash. Our main involvement with cash and the Health Service is that we continue to put in huge amounts, above inflation, and we have expanded the resources available to the Health Service at a rate that previous Governments have never been able to attain. The purpose of the White Paper is to improve the service for patients. The profession agrees with us about that and we look forward to working with it constructively to achieve that aim.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. and learned Friend's proposals will be especially welcomed by GPs in rural practices in Wales. Can he tell me what he thinks the average remuneration of such GPs will be under the new contract? Is he looking at the problem of over-counting, because it is reported that in some inner-city areas as many as 20 per cent. of patients have moved away? The new agreement should contain a proper basis for paying doctors.

Mr. Clarke: It is difficult for me to give some sort of average figure for rural doctors in Wales. We would need to take a little more account of the circumstances of individual practices. I remind my hon. Friend of the examples that we gave at the back of the document that I sent to all GPs. They showed how the earning capacity of a doctor could be affected, given various list sizes, depending on the services that they provide. We shall have to update that to give every practitioner a clear idea of where he or she stands in relation to the new proposals.

My hon. Friend asked about over-counting. That has been a problem in the past, and I am sure that at one time if the lists of all GPs were added together the total would have been greater than the population, because many deceased people remain on a doctor's list for a long time. At long last we are making rapid advances in the introduction of information technology, and GPs records are very much better than they were. We can eliminate the problem of patients appearing on more than one list and should certainly have more reliable figures to work on by the time the new contract comes in next year.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will not the Secretary of State's statement be for ever known as the Vale of Glamorgan settlement? Is it not right to say that, notwithstanding all the letters that hon. Members have had from constituents and from doctors complaining about the White Paper in general, doctors in the Vale of Glamorgan acted during the by-election in a way that frightened the living daylights out of the Government and the Prime Minister in particular? That is why she has sent this lackey to the Dispatch Box after meeting the doctors to arrange the settlement. Will the Minister now go the whole way and carry out the wishes of millions of constituents and completely withdraw the White Paper?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman understands, and, of course, it was a considerable frustration to me, that I could not proceed with the discussions before last night. I suspect that that was also a considerable disappointment to some people who campaigned on our behalf in the Vale of Glamorgan and elsewhere. I do not think that the action of the doctors was for party political reasons, because I assure the hon. Gentleman that the vast majority of doctors vote Conservative. By an unhappy coincidence they had summoned a conference of their local medical committees for last week and felt unable to proceed with any meaningful negotiations until the conference was over. We settled last night about an hour after the polls closed, which was a considerable misfortune.

I hope that some of the doctors who have been distributing stuff in Glamorgan reflect on what they have been putting out. I hope that some of the people who voted

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in mid-Glamorgan will look back on some of the leaflets to see what they said about excessive list sizes and so on in the light of last night's agreement.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): May I offer my congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend on his outstanding ability and on the success with which he has conducted and concluded these negotiations in very difficult circumstances? Does he agree that the reduction in the fixed element of the increase in the weighting of the performance-related classification element of GPs' remuneration is an important principle and a welcome part of the principle of economic rationality in the family practitioner service? Will he be encouraged to go further in applying that principle in reforming the National Health Service as a whole?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I certainly share his belief in the value of performace-related payments because they encourage the very best standards of service in the NHS and elsewhere. I am keen on the whole idea of performance-related payment systems in many walks of life. We have them for general managers in the Health Service, and I agree that that principle and others mean good value for money for the patient and are the kind of principles that we should apply as we implement our NHS reforms.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to say more about what is behind his remarks on higher capitation for deprived areas? I have one or two such areas in my constituency. They concern me very much and certainly need help. Last night, GPs in my constituency said to me that they would like a greater right to refuse patients more quickly than at the moment. Is that implied in the agreement? In an urban area such as my constituency GPs have said that the optimum number of patients per GP is 1,700. Will the agreement change anything?

Mr. Clarke: I can tell my hon. Friend that 1,700 is below the average list size. I do not know the details of particular practices, but I accept that in some places lists cannot be as big as they are elsewhere. That applies especially in scattered rural areas or in areas of social deprivation where the demands are likely to be heavier per patient. That is the reason for this system and we are still discussing the details with the profession. The Jarman index is accepted by everybody as the best measurement of social deprivation for the purpose of assessing capitation fees. We still need to settle precisely which districts it will apply to. We were near to agreement last night, but decided to have further discussions at official level to finalise the details.

I am not quite sure about my hon. Friend's point about the ease of refusing patients. It has always been the case that, except in exceptional circumstances, a GP cannot be forced to take a patient. It is obviously much better for the GP to be a willing recipient of the patient but in unfortunate cases where a person can get nobody to take him the family practitioner committee has to retain the right to oblige a practice somewhere to offer medical services.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the agreement reached last night has demonstrated that a substantial body of medical opinion has accepted the principle that some change and some improvements are needed in the Health Service? Consequently, does he agree that the Government are right and the Opposition are wrong?

Mr. Clarke: Clearly, I agree with my hon. Friend. It shows that there never was any deep-seated rift or division of aims between ourselves and the medical profession. Many doctors agree with our aims and with many of our proposals in the contract and in the White Paper. The belief that the whole profession is up in arms against us is a complete myth. It must be a sad disappointment to the Opposition to see that we can make progress on the contract because they know that we can make similar progress on the White Paper. I have every intention of doing that.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): As my right hon. and learned Friend has rightly said, the welcome agreement now leaves the road open for a sensible and rational debate about the merits of the White Paper. Does he agree that that debate can now be even more rational because there is no excuse whatever for leaving elerly and sick patients with the idea that their general practitioners will not have the time, resources or the prescriptive budget to treat them and that they might be turned away?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it is extremely important for us to continue to make clear that there never was, there is not now, and there never will be any circumstances in which elderly people will be turned away from their doctors or refused treatment as a result of any proposals by this Government. That is a total misunderstanding of what we propose and has aroused needless fears. We should all join in making sure that elderly people are reassured. The ideas being put about are total nonsense and we should now get back to a sensible debate about the proposals.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I have a letter here from a Mrs. A. M. Downes. Does the Secretary of State accept that thousands of elderly people are concerned about the cash-limiting proposal? Can he explain it further to my constituents? If the Government aim in some sense to put a ceiling on what GPs can spend, how can that be done without GPs running out of money at some point?

Regarding the capitation statement that is being negotiated for the deprived areas, is the Minsister aware of how complex this question is? Areas such as mine in Hackney will have special problems. Other areas have special needs because of the high percentage of elderly people who need much more time spent on them and who cannot just be pushed in and out to achieve cost effectiveness. Will the Minister agree that it will take more than this statement and the agreement on the contract to quiet the fears of the thousands of people with whom I am in touch and who are concerned? Conservative Members should take seriously the letters from constituents.

Mr. David Shaw: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We were taking matters seriously. We were here when the statement was made, and the hon. Lady was not.

Ms. Abbott: Conservative Members must have received hundreds of letters from constituents, as I have. Those constituents would be alarmed indeed if they could see Conservative Members giggling and chattering through

this portion of the debate. Will the Minister answer two particular points—about the cash limiting and about the complexity of the nature of how privatisation might work in deprived areas?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Lady may have gathered that it is somewhat unusual to intervene and ask a question about a statement when one has been present for only the last 10 minutes of the proceedings. I advise her to refer back to some of what has already been said.

However, I would not want the hon. Lady to start raising needless fears in Hackney or anywhere else. Regarding deprivation, and the Jarman index I am 99·9 per cent. certain that the borough of Hackney will qualify under the index we are using for higher payments per head for GPs serving the Hackney area.

Regarding the letter that the hon. Lady has, I hope that, whatever the political divisions between us, she will reply to the elderly lady repeating what I said a moment ago and saying that there is no prospect of her being deprived of any treatment at all. As I said earlier, the indicative drug budgets are an indication to a doctor of what it is believed his prescribing costs ought to be if he follows good clinical practice. If he over-subscribes he will be asked why and will be asked to justify his action to another doctor. If he cannot justify his action, it is possible that he will suffer penalties to his own pocket in his remuneration. In no circumstances will a cash limit be placed on his drug budget so that he is not able to prescribe for his patients so they can get the prescription dispensed at the chemist. To say anything different is complete nonsense and has nothing to do with our proposals.

My short answer is that the hon. Lady should write back to her constituent, telling her that her fears are groundless. Then yet another elderly patient need not be worried by some of the nonsense that has been circulated in recent weeks.

Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill

Again considered in Committee.

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Question again proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

11.52 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Before I was interrupted to listen to the Vale of Glamorgan settlement of the doctors, I was discussing the matter of clause 2. From time to time I was diverted, particularly by Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who is PPS to the Secretary of State for the Environment was raising matters about lawyers. He actually started me talking about the devious nature of lawyers and about Government lawyers who are arguing the toss among themselves on the queston of barristers and solicitors. They are offended by the idea of the Lord Chancellor to merge the two professions.

However, I want to talk about clause 2 because my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has just arrived, and he has special knowledge of weights and measures, since he used to work in an industry in which such matters were discussed at length. He has a lawyer's analytical mind. When I first met him, I asked him what sort of Bill he would introduce if he won the ballot. He said that he had several in mind, including a Bill on weights and measures. He will probably tell us all about that later.

I am worried about a provision in subsection (5), which is designed to insert in subsection (6), after the words "An inspector" the words "or authorised person". What does that mean? It conjures up a lot of possibilities. Does it mean that we could have inspectors without proper qualifications? Will they be assessed? We have heard the Government talking about teachers needing assessment all the time, but apparently it is a different matter for inspectors. Apparently, proper assessments are not necessary for inspectors in the private sector.

For instance, the Chief Whip of the Labour party could appoint an inspector to look at the weighing machine in the cloakroom downstairs. That weighing machine is used by weight-watchers in this place. I do not have to use it. However, the weight-watchers fiddle the machine, and I suspect that such a person would be given the job as an "authorised person". Such people could go to meetings of weight-watchers and say that they have lost three stone when they have not.

If such appointments were made, how would we guarantee that machines were in order? Let us suppose one of these machines for weighing was in Harrods. I guess that, in fact, there are many such machines in Harrods. Let us suppose that an authorised person, not an inspector, was appointed to see whether the machines in Harrods were working properly. It could be Tiny Rowland dressed up.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Would the telephone be bugged?

Mr. Skinner: He has already bugged the telephone in Harrods. He could be an authorised person, or he could be called an observer. Or it could be Donald Trelford making inquiries for a new edition of *The Observer*. Such people could go to Harrods, under the guise of being an authorised person, supposedly an inspector, to see whether weighing machines were working properly and were tuned

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to take account of Common Market measurements. The hon. Gentleman the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) who introduced the Bill said specifically that it was introduced so that we would be in advance of the Common Market in 1992.

So along goes this authorised person, probably Tiny Rowland, to Harrods to inspect the machines. What a time he would have. He could find out information on every single floor of Harrods. He could draw up another report for the Department of Trade and Industry. That report could be leaked and printed in a special edition of *The Observer*. That is the sort of danger that could occur under subsection (5). Any authorised person could go along to Harrods saying that he was an inspector under this Bill passed by the Tory Government.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The Consumers Association has set out its objections in a brief that it sent to hon. Members. Its main objection is that manufacturers and installers are likely to be the repairers of such weighing machines. That is an interesting point, which needs exploring.

Mr. Skinner: I have here the brief from the Consumers Association. As the Chair knows——

Mr. Forth: The Chairman.

12 noon

Mr. Skinner: Whatever it is. If we want to have a discussion about whether to say "Chair" or "Chairman" we can have one. We can discuss it as we debate clause 2 of the Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill, but I do not think that Mr. Walker wants that. He is shaking his head. It is pretty clear that he is on my side. He wants to talk about the things in the Bill, such as authorised persons. He probably wants me to talk at length about whether the lawyers have drawn up a dodgy Bill for the Government because they are fed up to the back teeth with all the attacks made on their profession by Lord Mackay. However, that is another question.

The authorised person is an important issue. This is a weakness of the Bill, because it is saying to the people involved in manufacturing this equipment, "Don't worry about how good or bad it is because instead of having proper authorised inspectors to test it we will send along people who are one of us. They will be Tory-authorised persons, who will just go along, take a cursory glance at a machine and say, 'It's all right. Everything's in order'", when all of us know that we are not getting the proper weight for our goods.

The Tory Government have drawn up this Bill and then passed it to a Back Bencher. He has naively and innocently —no, not innocently. I have seen him talking to people who have something to do with this dodgy Bill. He has come along thinking that he can hoodwink us on this Friday morning, but I have this document from the Consumers Association. The Consumers Association is the body that produces that well-known publication *Which?*, about which I was talking when I was interrupted by the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Sedgemore: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, because my hon. Friend is a lawyer.

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend expressed concern about whether things would improve if Donald Trelford went into Harrods to inspect the weighing machines. Will my hon. Friend come down on one side or the other? Does he prefer the Al-Fayed standards of fair trading or the Lonrho standards?

Mr. Skinner: I am pretty well disposed to the idea that the big battalions in the Tory party or close to the Tory party are cutting one another's throats. When I see the Al-Fayeds, probably supplied with the Sultan of Brunei's funny money—he is a friend of the Prime Minister and of her son—falling out with the unacceptable face of capitalism, I think to myself, "There is a chance for Socialism here."

The Chairman: Order. That has nothing to do with clause 2. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will return to it.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) was trying to get me to talk about the standards of fair trading in Harrods, and whether it was bought properly. I am not going to go down that road—not now—because I do not have the report from the Department of Trade and Industry in my hand. I did not expect to be discussing it this morning. If I had brought the report, I could have read out large chunks of it, and that would have been a story as well. It would probably have got more coverage than the statement from the Secretary of State for Health on the Vale of Glamorgan settlement with the doctors.

The Consumers Association sent us a brief—I hope that my hon. Friends will listen carefully to this, because it is no small point—in which it says that it was not properly consulted about this Bill. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare, who has introduced this Bill with the connivance of the Tory Government, did not properly consult the Consumers Association. The Government talk about being the friend of the consumer, but they did not consult the body that for many years has been well known as representing consumers' interests. The second paragraph of the brief says:

> "Consumers Association's objection to the Bill is that it seeks to introduce only those recommendations which would be of benefit to those connected with the manufacturing industry, without adequate safeguards to protect the consumer."

That sentence tells us everything about the Bill.

Mr. Barron: That is not inconsistent with the legislation passed in the past 10 years. The Government should at least get one point for consistency. It is as well that my hon. Friend was here this morning early on, and able to scrutinise the Bill. From what the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said, he consulted nobody and nobody consulted him. The Bill would have gone through without proper scrutiny were it not for the vigilance of hon. Members.

Mr. Skinner: We have had to do this on a number of Fridays. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare was to have introduced the Bill on another occasion, but disappeared from view. We were here about four Fridays ago discussing the Control of Smoke Pollution Bill, which was aimed at repealing the Clean Air Act 1956. My hon. Friend will understand our astonishment when we saw that that was the Government's aim. When we scrutinised the Bill, we found that it would only amend the Clean Air Act. They had got it wrong. The Government lawyers, or

the Government themselves, had produced a Bill that would do the opposite of what was intended. As a result of some close scrutiny over about three or four hours, we managed to persuade the House—it was one of those great victories that one can sometimes get on a Friday—that the amendments should be withdrawn before the Bill was passed.

We scrutinised that Bill as we are scrutinising this Bill, and we are able to show that the Consumers Association has a good argument. The Bill would have been nodded through this morning, in the wake of the by-election results, which some people are still studying. Some are active in their constituencies, but two or three of us managed to spot what was happening. Amendment after amendment was tumbling through the House without proper scrutiny and we stopped that. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) spoke at some length on this.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who was alert to this measure and what it could do. My hon. Friend spoke about *Which?* and paid tribute to it. Like my hon. Friend, it is the consumers' friend. Will not this measure, with its reference to the "authorised person" create problems for *Which?* Like many other people, I get the magazine, which shows all that one can buy in various lines. Will it not have immense problems with its reports? It will have to print, "Look out for 'authorised persons' stamped on it because we cannot say that the product that we tested is the one that you are buying or that it uses the right measures." The Bill will create immense problems for consumer magazines such as *Which?* in getting its information across clearly to consumers.

Mr. Skinner: That is the idea. The Government want to put consumers' interests at the bottom of the pile. They are interested only in people like the manufacturers of this equipment. No doubt, if we looked into where the profits of such manufacturers went, we would find some finishing up in the pocket of the Tory party. Instead of there being inspectors, there will be "authorised persons" who may allow changes, notwithstanding all the efforts made by the Consumers Association and *Which?*, which my hon. Friend apparently reads every week, along with defence magazines and other publications. I did not realise that my hon. Friend was reading so much material every day, and I commend him for that. I have only a cursory glance at *Which?* every now and again when a relevant Bill is coming before the House.

The Government are interested not in consumers but in profits for manufacturers. If they make machines that are dodgy and they are allowed to do so, they will make bigger profits. If that happens, they will say, "Well, it's pay-up day. The Tories have done us a good turn in Parliament". They will know that the Bill was smuggled through very nicely and that Labour Members were not ready for it. They will ask themselves what to do and the answer will be to give the Tory party a large sum of money, on top of what they have always given, for the next general election.

Mr. Sedgemore: It is payola.

Mr. Skinner: That is the word—my hon. Friend, who is a lawyer, uses such subtle terms. I am not sure whether it is a legal term.

Make no mistake, when the Government introduce Bills into the House they have three things in mind: to hammer the working-class, cut taxes for the wealthy and make big profits for the manufacturers who will put money into the Tory party funds. That is their policy in a nutshell. Such Bills should be in the Queen's Speech. If the Government want to introduce Bills of a political nature, why should they be allowed to let private Members smuggle them through? They are taking up time on a Friday when proper Bills could be introduced.

I can think of two or three Bills that should be discussed today. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has got a great Bill, which is designed to give pensioners proper living standards and proper pensions. It would ensure that they no longer pay standing charges. The Prime Minister does not pay standing charges at No. 10, nor does she pay rent or rates. It is costing £5 million a year to run Downing street—more than it costs to run Buckingham palace. We should be discussing a proper private Member's Bill that would give pensioners a square deal as well as concessionary fares, not just in London and not just for part of the day. Instead of Ministers being carted about from one oak panelled study to the next in ministerial cars, with free drivers, we could have old-age pensioners travelling the country. That would be a proper Bill to discuss on Friday instead of——

The Chairman: Order. We should be discussing the stamping of equipment by authorised persons.

Mr. Skinner: I want to stamp the concessionary passes for bus and rail travel for pensioners. You understand that, Mr. Walker, as you are close to getting one if you have not already got one. What would be better than to have a comprehensive bus and rail pass for every pensioner in Britain?

Ministers talk about market forces, but the moment they reach 60 or 65 they get their bus pass. I saw Lord Keith Joseph getting his photo done and I wondered, "What is he getting his photo taken for?". It was for a bus pass. When he was a Minister he was the guru of market forces, but the moment he was no longer a Minister he was into public expenditure in a big way.

We want machines to stamp the passes and to produce them.

Mr. Forth: Not weighing machines.

Mr. Skinner: We would need measuring machines. Is the Minister saying that such passes could be churned out willy-nilly? Oh no. Something would be needed to measure and weigh any form of equipment used to produce those passes. We want inspectors rather than authorised persons to do that.

Mr. Sedgemore: What about self-authorisation by the pensioner?

Mr. Skinner: We could have that if necessary and if we had such a truly libertarian society that would be nirvana.

Here we are on a Friday morning discussing a tinpot Bill, which has not been properly drawn up by Government lawyers. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch is a lawyer and I have already explained why the Bill has not been drawn up properly—one of the Tories spilt the beans. There are lawyers in the Government who are so frustrated at the reforms that have been suggested in the other place that

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they are beginning to put Bills before the House that are deliberately drawn up in a vague and obscure way. It is clear that they have said, "To hell with the Government. We'll give them a Bill that will cause some trouble." Such Bills have been drawn up by someone, in a moment of frustration over the new attack upon the legal fraternity. Those Bills are not the genuine article. That is why we have to scrutinise Bills even more nowadays, especially after the other day when we discussed a Bill that intended to repeal the Clean Air Act when it should have read "amend". I smelt a rat.

Mr. Wiggin: This is tedious repetition.

12.15 pm

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman did not have the guts to take on the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) when she appeared before him in the Select Committee on Agriculture. He did not ask her any of the right questions and yet he has the cheek to talk to me about tedious repetition. He should have used some tediously repetitive questions that day instead of being treated the way he was by that hon. Lady.

The Chairman: Order. All of this is a long way from clause 2 and is irrelevant to the stand part debate.

Mr. Skinner: I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), who originally referred to the Consumers Association, wants to make another reference to that matter.

Mr. Barron: The authorised person mentioned in clause 2 would replace local authority officers. When such officers are looking after the interests of consumers, they are subject to some form of democratic accountability. If people are authorised as suggested in the Bill, that would diminish, to some extent the relationship between democratic accountability and the inspectors. If my hon. Friend looks at the back page of the Bill, he will realise that it will probably cost jobs in local authorities. What does my hon. Friend think about the weakening of the democratic process as proposed in the Bill?

Mr. Skinner: Some time ago, representatives of the Labour local authorities, who are opposed to the Bill, sent us information about it when it first appeared on the agenda. It is probable that the environmental health department of local authorities employs such inspectors. If the Bill goes through, we shall have authorised persons, without proper credentials, doing the job. They could be taking a back-hander from companies—think about it.

Clause 2(5) states:

"there shall be inserted the words 'or authorised person'".

Suppose people come along who are not properly accredited, not connected to the local authority and therefore not subject to any public accountability. Suppose they are in the pay of the company concerned. We would have a real mess on our hands. There is a sinister side to the clause.

In the past few months everyone has been conscious about safety and the Government have sent Ministers to tell us how concerned they are about safety in this, that or the other. But here we are, the Government have connived with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare—he has admitted that the Bill was drafted by Governmnt lawyers. That Bill will reduce inspectors' ability to do their job and it will allow any authorised person to take on that job. There is no doubt that this is not just an ordinary, innocent little measure contained in a Private Member's Bill.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): My hon. Friend said that the local authorities are aware of what is proposed in the Bill. If I remember aright, Derbyshire county council was way out in front by spotting it first. It informed my hon. Friend about the Bill and yet other hon. Members who represent Derbyshire and who sit on the Conservative Benches have criticised that council for the amount of money that it spends, but it appears to be spending it in the right direction.

Mr. Skinner: It made representations in the middle of all the Government attacks upon it. There was a happy ending, because, despite all the targeting by the Tories, Derbyshire Labour authorities had a great success yesterday and now have 52 Labour members out of 84 seats. A seat was won by Labour next door to me, in Brackenfield. It was a great victory.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Here comes more praise for Bookbinder.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman does not like it whenever I mention a great victory in Derbyshire. The hon. Gentleman, who is as partisan as any right hon. or hon. Member, does not like it, but he must lump it.

The Chairman: Order. No matter how great the victory, it has no relevance to clause 2.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, it does. Derbyshire county council, fortified by that victory at Brackenfield, will say, "We were right to make representations about that distorted weights and measures Bill. We shall carry on our campaign in the knowledge that we have won another seat from the Tories and have a mandate." Although that council was saying, at the tether end of a four-year period, that we should oppose the Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill, it —together with Nottinghamshire county council, in which Labour also made gains yesterday—will be able to say, "We were right to send messages to our Members of Parliament that they should oppose the Bill. The electors realise that the Tory Government are not on the side of the consumers, but only on the side of the manufacturers."

Not that there are many manufacturers. The question must be asked whether there will be Japanese machines or more Japanese machines? Will those firms have their own inspectors? If there are to be more Japanese manufacturers, where will their factories be located? Is the Bill part of the build-up to 1992? Will the Japanese manufacture machines in various parts of Great Britain so that they can overcome the barriers against third countries and invade the Common Market? Such a thing is conceivable. Account should be taken of the Japanese element. There will be many more Japanese manufacturers in the future, but many other factories will be closed.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): What will happen if the authorised person is Japanese and does not speak English?

Mr. Skinner: One may ask why the Japanese are coming to Britain rather than the French or Germans. Suppose that the Japanese spot the Bill and say to themselves, "Here is another little niche." The reason that

the Japanese come to Britain is that their second language is English, which is not the case with the French or Germans. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare considered that aspect, or perhaps the Government have but did not tell him.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend has not addressed the point that the authorised person must be appointed by the Secretary of State. The idea behind that is to centralise control away from local authorities. How will the Secretary of State know that the person who authorises is capable of performing the duties involved?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point, because in Wales another Secretary of State may be responsible. If the Secretary of State for Wales is made responsible for implementing one part of the Bill, and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is made responsible for another, there is bound to be conflict. It is almost certain that the Secretary of State for Wales will come up with another coded message. We may not immediately understand it, and shall have to wait for the newspapers to do so. The Secretary of State for Wales will brief the press, saying, "When you read my speech on Monday, it will seem a bit vague and abstract, and a particular line should be explained as follows." We will pick up the newspapers and suddenly read a massive attack by the Secretary of State for Wales on the Prime Minister. The ordinary person may read that speech and be unable to piece it together, but it is the Lobby briefing that matters.

Much will depend on whether the Secretary of State for Wales keeps his job. I think that the right hon. Lady will sack him. That point is worth discussing at some other time, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman will get the chop after what he has been doing of late. It is just a question of the Prime Minister thinking to herself, "I can leave him there for the moment and blame him for the by-election defeat." I understand that the Vale of Glamorgan by-election has just been announced.

Mr. Greg Knight: What does that by-election have to do with clause 2?

Mr. Skinner: I will explain what it has to do with clause 2. Under the Bill, any authorised person can do what they like. A person can masquerade and enter a building saying, "Where is your weighing machine? I am an authorised person." Somebody could walk into a BBC studio and ask, "Where is your weighing machine? I am an authorised person."—and then walk into the studio, get on television, and announce the result of the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. That is what could happen.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): My hon. Friend makes an interesting digression about the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. I am sure that his comments are right and that the Labour majority has been huge. My hon. Friend is rightly suspicious about the Bill. Some years ago, the Government allowed not just building inspectors appointed by local authorities—which they still are up to a point—but others to do a similar job. Those other inspectors can be associated with a particular company. A person inspecting a building to ensure that it meets building regulations could be someone who is associated with the company constructing it. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to be concerned, and I should like him to take that aspect into consideration. It is clear that the Government lawyers are only following the path that they have been wanting to follow for many years.

Mr. Skinner: The Bill represents a relaxation of rules that have been observed for many years. The Consumers Association briefing points out that the existing form of weights and measures has endured for 100 years, but the Government want to break it. We would all agree with the Government if they wanted to tighten up the legislation. If the Government lawyers who drafted the Bill—as the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare admitted was the case—had tightened up the existing provisions, we would have said, "It is not a bad Bill and we shall give it a bit of a decent ride on a Friday. It looks as though the hon. Gentleman has introduced a Bill that will assist the consumer." But when one examines the Bill, one finds that it relaxes the existing rules, so that instead of having inspectors, there will be authorised persons who could be in the Tory party and who, in the words of the Prime Minister, could be "one of us". Those manufacturers will not be too concerned about their product.

Let us think about this. There will be weighing machines at the entrance to the Channel tunnel. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) laughs, but I can see it happening. And what kind of inspector is going to go there? Goods will be travelling not only to the 12 countries in the Common Market, but to countless others. The machines might have to measure in ecus, for instance—that is one of the new words that have come from the Common Market.

The entrance to the Channel tunnel is a dangerous place. Are we to allow an "authorised person" who is not a properly trained inspector to turn up there saying, "I am an authorised person. I have come to check this very important machine at the entrance to the Channel tunnel."? He might be someone who could be described as a terrorist, wanting to go beyond the weighing machine and into the tunnel.

12.30 pm

People will say—as they do now when there has been an accident—"Fancy that. Were there no proper health and safety inspectors?". We shall say, "No, because the Government have cut them back." Every time that inspections are cut back in this highly technological age it opens the door for accidents. That is another reason why we must oppose the idea of the authorised person as proposed in subsection (5). We might have to force it to a vote—and, judging by the ranks on the Conservative Benches, we might be successful. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare has already agreed to withdraw subsection (4) because it has been found to be faulty.

Mr. Cohen: May I quote briefly from a letter from Cleveland county council objecting to the Bill? The letter says:

"The Bill is being promoted by Jerry Wiggin MP (Weston Super Mare) who, amongst a clutch of interests, acts as a consultant to the National Federation of Scale and Weighing Machine Manufacturers."

Mr. Wiggin: I have declared my interest.

Mr. Cohen: I know that the hon. Gentleman has done that. Is it not a possibility, however, that the Secretary of State, who has taken powers to appoint authorised persons, would say to the hon. Gentleman, "You have been a good boy, getting this Bill through for the

[Mr. Cohen]

Government. I shall make you the authorised person." The hon. Gentleman could then go back to his friends the manufacturers and tell them to do what they liked.

Mr. Skinner: I do not think that the Government would be as blatant as that. The hon. Gentleman has admitted a direct financial interest.

Mr. Cohen: But he would not be qualified as a local councillor.

Mr. Skinner: He would be disqualified. I may be being over-fair to the Government, beyond the bounds of reason, but I do not think that they would be so blatant. They would probably appoint someone just a step away to try to make it look right and proper.

Given all the inadequacies found in it this morning, I do not think that the Bill will get through.

Mr. Barron: We must wait and see.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, there is plenty of time, but many Labour Members are now beginning to represent the views of consumers. I note that the SLD and SDP Members have left. I say this merely in passing, but they play a very poor role in the House. They simply do not do their job. Some lawyer flitted in earlier and asked a question on the statement by the Secretary of State for Health, but then they all left. Where are they? Are they moping because they had a bad night at the election? A representative should be present.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that there is enormous scope for political patronage in the appointment of the authorised person? In the debate on the Widdicombe report, Labour Members were criticised for twin-tracking, but let us reflect on the scope for twin-tracking of unemployable Conservative supporters who might be appointed to "authorised person" posts all over the country. Were the business interests of the Prime Minister's son in Dallas to fall flat on their face, would there not be a risk of his emerging in this country as an authorised person? Then there is the grandson. In my view there is enormous scope for serious misuse of the powers of patronage.

Mr. Skinner: There are all those possibilities. I am not so sure that the Prime Minister would be too keen to let Mark have a job as an authorised person because he would lose his way. He would finish up looking for weighing machines in the desert. That is why they have all this electronic tagging. The Government first thought of that when he got lost in the desert. They said, "That's a good idea." That is why the Government have introduced electronic tagging, but I think that Mark would be a little unreliable.

To sum up——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Before my hon. Friend does that, is there not another angle? My hon. Friend referred to Conservatives being encouraged to take on the job of an authorised person. No doubt they would consider taking low earnings for it. The Government have created millions of lower-paid jobs. If they could convince Conservatives to take it on, would they not hope that that would influence other people to take lower-paid jobs and to continue to suffer under this Administration?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. Failed Ministers could become authorised persons. Every time the Prime Minister sacked somebody she could summon him to her office and say, "It's all right. You've had eight years and a good run for your money, but I don't like your braces these days." I suppose the conversation goes along that road. "Now it's goodbye. However, I've a little sinecure for you, as a weights and measures authorised person." The Government could have initials for that. They could include it in the Queen's honours. Mind you, I do not think that the Queen would accept it. If the Prime Minister went along to the Queen and said, "I've thought up a new honour for failed Ministers, as an authorised person" I do not think that the Queen would buy it. There is a lot of mucking down, to use a phrase, between the Prime Minister and the Queen, but that is a debate for another day—unless my hon. Friends want to develop it. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is right. To be an authorised person could be a nice little sinecure so that when Ministers were sacked they did not drop immediately right to the bottom. They could have this little job as authorised persons.

Ms. Abbott: My hon. Friend has made an important point about employing politicians who have come to the end of their days in party politics as authorised persons. As he said, it would be a nice little sinecure for them. That is why we want to delete subsection (5). Does my hon. Friend think that when the Opposition come to power we would appoint ex-Ministers as authorised persons? What criteria would we use? If the Bill is to get through, we have to examine the ramifications.

Mr. Skinner: I would make representations to the effect that if the Bill did get through—and I do not think that it will—the Opposition ought to repeal it. It would be a defective law. We ought to repeal it and not be tempted to recommend people as authorised persons, in the way that the Tories would. We should not go down that road one little step.

Mr. Cohen: Another point that worries me is the financial effects of the Bill. If the job of an authorised person could be a sinecure or an honour, those people might—like the people at London Regional Transport when it was made a quango—get chauffeurs. They do not go on the buses or the tube. When the Government appoint authorised persons under the Bill, they might say to the failed Ministers, "Have a car and a chauffeur." Could there not be a money element to the creation of authorised persons? Is not that an aspect that should be included in the Bill?

Mr. Skinner: The financial effects are spelled out in the Bill. They are a bit vague and could mean all things to all people, but the Bill states that it

"will not involve any additional expenditure. The costs of administering and monitoring the scheme will be recovered as fees paid by authorised persons to central and local government. In the case of local government, the loss of testing fees"—

my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley was right about the removal of public accountability—

"under the present system may result in a small overall reduction in the income of some authorities."

That is an attack on local government as authorities will lose income and manpower when hitherto they were responsible and publicly accountable for carrying out such inspections.

Finally, clause 2 should be opposed because subsection (5) contains the tremendous loophole for inspectors to be replaced by authorised persons. It is an attack on local authorities. The Bill is opposed by the Consumers Association, which has briefed every Member of Parliament saying that it was not properly consulted on the Bill before it came before the House. Opposition Members are not prepared to allow British consumers to be affected in that way. We want our weighing machines and other implements and equipment to be properly tested. We are not happy about the way in which inspectors are to be replaced by authorised persons. The Bill is a relaxation of the safety laws. For all those reasons, I oppose clause 2 of the Bill and I know that my hon. Friends will agree with me.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in opposing clause 2, and particularly subsection (5) and the insertion of the notion of "authorised persons". I shall speak fairly succintly about that important issue.

There are three main reasons why we have to look very closely at subsection (5). Too many hon. Members are taking the question of weights and measures lightly, but important issues are at stake. First, in some constituencies the vote is weighed. It would not be enough for an authorised person to have checked the scales. Secondly, there is a big debate about measures in pubs, particularly in relation to wine. Thirdly, there is the general issue of the qualifications of an authorised person.

I shall begin by talking about constituencies where the vote is weighed. It would not be satisfactory to have only an authorised person inspecting those machines. At the time of the 1983 general election, I was working as a journalist for TV-am breakfast television. I was sent to do a piece on constituencies which in the past five or 10 years had been the first to declare. Certain constituencies were always the first to declare on election night, and Torbay and Guildford were among those constituencies.

Torbay holds the record for declaring first, so I went there with a film crew to find out exactly how they managed to declare first. Torbay is known as the English Riviera and used to be represented by Sir Frederic Bennett who has retired and been replaced by the present hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason). I spoke at length to the chief executive and the returning officer and to people who had been involved in previous general elections in Torbay. I also found all the old film of the Torbay general election. There were many films of when Torbay had declared first. I asked the chief executive how Torbay always managed to declare its result first, despite the stiff competition. He replied, "I shall tell you the secret. First, we count the votes in the normal way, but when we check the result, instead of counting the votes manually, as all other constituencies do, we weigh them." I asked, "Is that legal?" He replied, "As far as I know it is." He took me into a back room in the town hall at Torbay and showed me the beautiful Victorian scales on which he weighed the vote as a second check on the ballot. That is why time after time Torbay managed to declare its vote first.

Those scales, old as they are, have to be checked by properly qualified inspectors with a good public reputation. They are appointed by a panel and their appointment is open to public scrutiny. Under clause 2(5) the inspection could be carried out by an "authorised person" and that could mean anybody. Therefore, the result in a constituency such as Torbay would be open to challenge.

12.45 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): As the hon. Lady has not previously honoured us with her presence during the passage of the Bill and as she has not communicated with me in any way, it might be helpful if I explain to her that the Government will not issue a licence to anybody who does not conform to British standard 5750. I hope that she will accept that the Government will not issue a licence without the most rigorous inspection by a third and independent party. I want to ensure that that is clear in case the myth is promulgated further.

Ms. Abbott: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying the issue. My hon. Friends and I and those in the Public Gallery want to know what that rigorous inspection will entail. What qualifications will the inspectors have to have? Who will appoint them?

Mr. Wiggin: My hon. Friend the Minister will explain.

Ms. Abbott: The Minister is not at the Dispatch Box. He is sitting on the Back Benches talking to the hon. Member for Weston-super-mare (Mr. Wiggin). It looks as if I shall never know the answers.

It is important to get rid of clause 2(5) and to have a proper inspectorate, not an "authorised person".

A controversial issue which concerns my hon. Friends and myself is the measure of wine served in a public house or restaurant. We are concerned that the tests should be done by qualified inspectors. How do the public know how big a glass of wine will be when it is ordered in a bar or a restaurant? At least they now know that at some time an inspector might check the measures. Under the Bill, that check would be carried out by an "authorised person."

There has been a campaign to tighten up the way in which wine is served by the glass. A group of trade organisations introduced a voluntary code of practice in May 1984. It is a voluntary code but the inspectorate advised on it. Under this Bill, who knows who would advise on it. The code of practice states:

"quantities of wine should be given alongside prices, on menus, wine lists and so on, and be displayed at bars and self-service counters.

quantities should conform with one of 11 specific glass sizes listed in the Weights and Measures Act 1963.

no bar or restaurant should sell wine by the glass in more than two measures, and the difference between these two measures should be at least two fluid ounces (or 50 ml)"

As I understand it, the existing inspectorate is keen to ensure that the voluntary code is enforced. How are we to know that an "authorised person" will enforce it with vigour?

Conservative Members look bored, but this is not a trivial issue. A survey has been conducted to see whether the voluntary code has improved the measures served in pubs. The survey found that fewer than one in seven premises complied fully with the code. Therefore, in six out of seven wine bars or pubs one might be given short

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measure. The survey also found that only one in six premises was displaying clearly the quantity and price. If those facts do not show the need for a properly qualified inspectorate, I do not know what does.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): In how many of those cases does the problem have anything to do with the equipment?

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Gentleman is not looking at the issue in a developed way. It is not just a matter of the equipment but of the political and administrative culture and the way in which the issue of weights and measures is perceived. There is no doubt that wine bars and restaurants would take the issue of short measures much more seriously if they knew that a qualified inspectorate was likely to check up. Such a qualified inspectorate should be supported by the House and its role should not be limited by clause 2(5).

Clause 2(5), which provides for authorised persons and detracts from the role of legitimate weights and measures inspectors, undermines and dilutes the political and administrative culture and will lead pubs and clubs to believe that they can give short measures.

The surveyors found that in over half the premises they visited staff were not even aware that there was a code for selling wine by the glass. How can staff take weights and measures seriously if Conservative Members do not take weights and measures inspectors seriously?

Mr. Waller: The hon. Lady was not present earlier, so I repeat that I speak as vice-president of the Institute of Trading Standards Administration. Is she aware that if weights and measures inspectors did not have to spend so much time on routine tasks they would have more time to deal with genuine abuses such as the giving of short measures in pubs because of human error or intention rather than anything to do with equipment? The hon. Lady is speaking against the interests of the consumer, who would be better served if trading standards officers had more time to deal with genuine abuses of the weights and measures regulations.

Ms. Abbott: I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman should describe the provisions of clause 2(5) as trivial. Is he aware that in the 18th century there were bread riots because of under-weight bread? The issue of equipment and weights and measures is by no means trivial. If one visited the Vale of Glamorgan this morning, where the Labour party has won the by-election with a 6,000 majority, and asked those 6,000 people who constitute the Labour majority——

Madam Deputy Chairman (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am not sure that this is relevant. The hon. Lady said that she would be succinct. I am waiting for her to fulfil that claim.

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said that trading standards officers do not want to carry out trivial tasks. I have a letter from the county of Cleveland, in which it clearly takes the view that self-verification by manufacturers under local authority trading standards officers' supervision is a reasonable development. However, it does not want to hand over all powers of supervision to the industry, which is the key point that the hon. Gentleman avoided. The Government want to hand verification to the industry to spite local authorities, whereas it should be under independent local authority supervision.

Mr. Wiggin: Precisely for that reason, and at the request of the Association of County Councils, I tabled an amendment requiring that local trading standards officers should be consulted before a licence is granted. If the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) had read the amendments and understood the Bill he would understand that I have done precisely what has been asked for.

Ms. Abbott: It must be wrong to hand verification to manufacturers.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Just to reinforce my hon. Friend's point, would she like to dwell on the relevance of the Labour majority in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election, which was 6,028 votes?

Ms. Abbott: Conservative Members have said that this is a trivial matter. More than once, they have said that the powers given to authorised persons are trivial. Each and every one of the 6,000-odd people who constitute the Labour majority in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election would say that this is not a trivial matter. We do not want verification handed over to the industry.

Mr. Cohen: I am sorry to have an argument with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) through my hon. Friend, but perhaps she would like to comment on the supervision provided through local authorities. Cleveland county council makes it clear in its letter that this private Member's Bill is a shabby process to avoid consultation. If this were a Government Bill, the Government would be forced to consult local authorities and trading standards officers fully. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare to say that he wants to move an amendment providing for consultation, but that will be too late. The Bill will have been passed and rights taken away. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Ms. Abbott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. What he has said about local authorities confirms that the Bill is not in the consumers' interest. Why has not the Bill come forward as a Government measure, with proper consultation? It is all well and good for the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare to say that he will move an amendment at this late stage. Why was not there full consultation before with local authorities and consumers?

Self-verification by the industry is a grave matter. Interpolation of so-called authorised persons as properly trained weights and measures inspectors is a serious matter, and clause 2 must be opposed. Conservative Members argue that authorised persons are needed because the weights and measures inspectorate does not have the time to verify equipment. If they are worried about the shortage of staff in the inspectorate and want to lessen the work load, they should argue for more rate support grant for authorities such as Cleveland so that they can employ as many weights and measures inspectors as it takes to check scales and pub measures and supervise pub staff who are pouring drinks. The Bill creates a shabby half-and-half twilight cast of authorised person to take work from the weights and measures inspectorate.

Weights and measures work is a distinguished calling. I had a lot to do with such people when I was on the environmental health committee of Westminster city council. As Westminster is in the centre of London, weights and measures is a pressing issue. Conservative Members who are serious about reducing the inspectors' work load and want them to do a good job should demand and fight for more money for local authorities so that they can employ staff and trainees and open the profession. If that happens, the weights and measures issue will be dealt with once and for all. The answer is not the creation of authorised persons but more fully qualified weights and measures inspectors.

Mr. Cohen: I have referred to the letter from the Cleveland county council, a Labour local authority which opposes the clause. Is my hon. Friend aware that not just Labour local authorities oppose it? The London borough of Sutton, which is not a labour authority, has made a number of points that have been raised in the debate. Its letter states:

"These are important and significant matters which could reduce the level of consumer protection and requires proper consultation, publicity and parliamentary debate."

The letter calls for:

"Support in opposing the Bill unless and until such time as all affected parties have been consulted and the rights of the consumer receive adequate protection."

That letter is from a Conservative authority, so it can be seen that opposition to the Bill runs across the political spectrum.

1 pm

Ms. Abbott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to the fact that the Bill is opposed not only by Labour authorities, but by other authorities, whether Conservative or SLD—although after the recent county council elections there are few SLD councils now. The only one left is the Isle of Wight and that is a jolly good thing too, because the SLD is not competent to run a local authority.

Clause 2 is opposed by local authorities whatever their political persuasion. Local authorities, including Conservative authorities, believe that the clause will lessen the protection available to the consumer.

Yet the Bill is being put through as a private Member's Bill on a Friday, with no Conservative Back Bencher now present. This is supposed to be the era of heightened interest in consumers, yet they will have their protection lessened by the Bill and especially by clause 2. That is an outrage. If Conservative Members were serious about the problems of the weights and measures inspectorate they would not be supporting the Bill. This is a vested interest Bill which will help industry.

If we look at the history of weights and measures, we see that many serious disturbances were caused by short measures and short weights, especially of bread. I read history and I remember learning of the bread riots of the 18th century. We should remember the seriousness of short weight and we should realise that even now some authorities weigh votes. No one had to weigh the votes in the Vale of Glamorgan, but we had a sizeable majority of more than 6,000. In the next general election, we may need to weigh the votes.

Madam Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Lady must speak to clause 2.

Ms. Abbott: Labour Members would not want "authorised persons" to weigh votes in the Vale of Glamorgan. We would want proper weights and measures inspectors to verify the fact that our majority at the next general election had shot up from 6,000 to 30,000.

The issue we are debating is significant. Discussions about short measures go on in pubs and wine bars. When we consider the pathetic inadequacy of the measures in this private Member's Bill, we see that, instead of a fully staffed, properly paid and properly respected group of weights and measures inspectors, we shall have a shabby group of people known as "authorised persons", and the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare has not said what qualifications they will need to have.

The Bill has been promoted, whether consciously or unconsciously, by industry interests. It will help only the interests of industry.

Mr. Wiggin: What is wrong with that?

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Gentleman asks——

Mr. Wiggin: What is wrong with its helping the interests of British industry?

Ms. Abbott: What is wrong is that Parliament is supposed to be concerned with the interests of all groups and individuals, not just industry, even British industry. We are supposed to be concerned about the consumer, the housewife, the person who shops in the market and the supermarket and the customer in the pub and the wine bar. It would be wrong for any hon. Member to be thought to represent sectional interests.

The Bill has been promoted, consciously or not, by the interests of industry. The Bill serves no purpose but the greater convenience and interest of industry. The Bill pays no heed to the voices of consumers, local authorities or professionals.

The Bill will do nothing to meet the concerns of people about the weights and measures of such things as bread. It will do nothing to help the people of Torbay who are anxious to know about the methods used to weigh their votes in elections. It will not help the more than 6,000 people who constitute the Labour majority in the Vale of Glamorgan. This is an age in which the voice of the consumer is heard in the land—which includes the Vale of Glamorgan with its 6,000 Labour majority. But the Bill is deaf to the voice of the consumer. I urge the Committee to oppose not only the clause but the entire Bill.

Mr. Barron: I am sure that the Bill's promoter will agree that clause 2 is the heart of the legislation. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) made a sedentary intervention about protecting British industry and asked what was wrong with that. I do not think that any Opposition Member would want to do anything other than protect British industry. We all help industry in our constituencies, and sometimes we help it by supporting legislation. However, we do not want to weaken the voice of the consumer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) gave a graphic example of short measure in wine bars. It would be difficult, even with electronic measures, to stamp out such practices. I am sure that the Bill's promoter will recognise that it is feasible to have a machine that records exact measure. The Bill deals

[Mr. Barron]

with machinery that not only weighs consumer products passed over the counter, but the new equipment that we see in supermarkets.

I understand that the official term for price marking in supermarkets is bar coding. If a customer goes to the supermarket for a product that does not have the price stamped on it, it will not be until she gets to the checkout that she will know how much it costs. That is because the product has on it this strange bar coding that has to be zipped over using a piece of equipment. That is difficult to understand, even in present day society, as a means of measuring prices. The equipment is currently covered by trading standards officers and its development needs to be carefully watched.

The bar coding system is used in all major retail outlets and now that corner shops are disappearing, we no longer see goods measured in pounds and ounces. We are moving into the age of electronics and the machines in use are not as perfect as people would like them to be.

One of the criticisms levelled by the Consumers Association is that the people who are responsible for the repair and maintenance of electronic machines do not set them up properly. I am sure the promoter will acknowledge that not every retail outlet has the same type of machine. My brother has a small butcher's business in Rotherham, and his machine is very good. When it has been programmed it shows the customer the exact price per pound, and how much the meat weighs and costs when it is placed on the scale. It is complicated machinery and, if it is not set up correctly, all sorts of things can go wrong. Different types of machine are involved. Small businesses repair these machines, and they have been called back in the past by trading standards officers when machines have not measured correctly.

Therefore, this legislation affects not only British industry but, more importantly, it affects consumers. Any changes to this legislation should make the position of the consumer stronger, not weaker. Local authorities, who have a statutory responsibility in this area, have said to Members and to well-respected consumer associations that they have misgivings about the Bill.

Ms. Abbott: I raised the question of the consumer most judiciously, and the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) talked with some sharpness about what was wrong with doing something in the interests of British industry. Does that not suggest to my hon. Friend that the hon. Gentleman may be aware, in the bottommost recesses of his heart, that this Bill really does nothing for consumers? Would the sharpness of his retort not indicate a touch of guilty conscience about how consumers are affected by this Bill?

Mr. Barron: That is difficult to deal with, without hazarding a guess about the hon. Gentleman's position in British industry.

Mr. Wiggin: Let us be clear about the consumer interests; they were represented on the Eden committee, which was unanimous in its findings, with this Bill being part of its recommendations in its findings.

Mr. Barron: Before the hon. Gentleman actually said it, I was about to point out that the Bill contains only part of the recommendations of the Eden committee. Certainly, it does not contain all of the recommendations. It has been alleged that this could be considered a quasi-Government Bill rather than a private Member's Bill. We believe, as do people involved in drawing up the Eden report, that it would have been right and constitutionally proper, Madam Chair, for the Minister to have proposed the Bill on behalf of the Government.

Madam Deputy Chairman: I may not be addressed as "Chair". We are in Committee. The hon. Gentleman should refer to me by name.

Mr. Barron: I apologise.

We would have been much happier if the Government had adopted a more comprehensive approach to the recommendations and introduced from the Dispatch Box a Bill containing all, and not some, of the recommendations of the Eden committee. That would have been a better procedure than this private Member's Bill.

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Gentleman, the Member for Weston-super-Mare, said that the Bill included part of the recommendations of the Eden committee. Would my hon. Friend not agree that this is definitely one of those situations in which half a loaf is not better than no bread? What should have happened is that a Government Bill should have been drawn up to take into account all the recommendations of the Eden committee, particularly acknowledging interests other than those of the very narrow sectional interests of British industry.

Mr. Barron: I was making that point, and my hon. Friend is right to echo it. Most people involved in the industry, certainly those involved in the Consumers Association, felt that the Bill would have been better if it had included all the recommendations of that committee. I thought that we were here to protect the interest of the consumer.

1.15 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) talked about the Grantham grocer's shop. We have all heard stories about the grocer who, when weighing out the sugar—before it came in its pre-packed form with the bar code—kept his little finger on the scales as the sugar was going into the packet, then lifted it off with the sugar saying, "Here you are, that is sixpence". We have moved on from those times and there is much more pre-packaging, although many retail outlets still operate in that way. Some shops have bulk-bought stuff in big tubs, which is cheaper if one does not mind buying in that way. Other products are bought in bulk and then sold on to the next person down the line, and they also use scales. Therefore, many of the points made in the report would have been better dealt with under a more comprehensive Bill that took into account all the different ways of retailing food.

Ms. Abbott: This important point illustrates the significance of the Bill. As my hon. Friend said, the goods in most shops are pre-packaged, so there is no need for a weights and measures inspectorate, but the sector of the population particularly concerned about the Bill, the accuracy of weights and measures and a properly developed inspectorate, is the elderly. Elderly people do not go into a supermarket to buy half a pound of cheese. They prefer going to small corner shops and buying two

ounces of cheese, or one rasher of bacon, or a slice of ham, which is weighed out for them. Therefore, they are particularly concerned.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is right. As I said earlier, I have an interest to declare in that my brother works in the retail business as a butcher. He has a small shop in Rotherham and he has to compete against the major retail outlets—the supermarkets and the hypermarkets where one can go in and buy everything that one wants for the garden and the home. That makes things difficult for the small retailer and many of his customers are those whom my hon. Friend has described, who would be seeking the protection of the local authorities via the inspectors from the local weights and measures department who inspect the weights and measures machines in retail outlets. That is why it is vital that the Bill is made more comprehensive.

Under clause 2, once the authorised person has been agreed and has paid a fee to the Secretary of State, as set out in clause 1, to which the Committee has already agreed, he has the right

"to test and stamp equipment".

There could be a conflict of interest if such a person were also being paid under contract to service the machines. Under the present system, all new or repaired equipment has to be tested by inspectors, but clause 2(5), will add authorised persons to the system. Inspectors are trading standards officers in my local authority and, I suspect, in other local authorities as well. By law those officers are prohibited from having any financial or other type of interest in the manufacture or repair of the equipment that they check.

If the Bill is passed we are led to believe that the inspectors will still oversee the work done by others—the authorised persons. The inspectors have no interest except a professional one—to look after consumer interests in various outlets. In clause 2, however, authorised persons will take over the checking of machines when they are installed. We assume that they will check the repair and any adjustment subsequently made to those machines, prior to the inspector checking them.

Although we are discussing clause 2, other parts of the Bill affect local authorities in terms of jobs as well as finance. It appears that the present system of inspectors is to be run down, but they have a statutory responsibility and they cannot have a vested interest in any of the work that they undertake.

I know that the Government's record for funding local government is not good. Their treatment of local government employees is not much better. Almost every other week in this House another Bill is introduced that is designed to remove local government employees, whether through privatisation or competitive tendering, as it is called by the Government.

It would be wrong if the Bill weakened the protection currently given to consumers by our trading standards officers. That fear, which has been expressed by my hon. Friends, is also shared by various consumer associations. In those circumstances we should reconsider whether clause 2 should stand part of the Bill. The change in the relationship between trading standards officers and retail outlets should be considered in detail during our deliberations on the Bill.

The Bill will take away from the local authorities the statutory responsibility to test and verify machines on installation, and any subsequent repairs. The system will be subjected to a quasi-privatisation as a result of the appointment of authorised persons. Control will move back to Whitehall because the Secretary of State will have the power to appoint such authorised people. The Bill will centralise rather than decentralise. From the Government's rhetoric we are led to believe that they want to roll back the powers of the state, but in reality we know that power is being centralised all the time. The Bill is yet another example of that process.

Ms. Abbott: It is clear that state control is being broken down through glasnost and so on in the East and in Russia. Is it not extraordinary that the Bill and especially clause 2(5), are designed to increase the power of the state?

Mr. Barron: I agree with that well-timed and well-intentioned intervention. What is so upsetting is that local authorities have a fine and honourable record with their work in weights and measures. They currently undertake those responsibilities in statute but impartially and with no vested interest other than that of the consumers whom they are professionally employed to protect. I would sooner see consumer interests vested in local authorities, who reflect their local regions and who understand all aspects of life in their local communities, and who know whether or not the public are getting a good deal and not a short measure when buying certain items currently protected by local authority responsibility, by statute.

Ms. Abbott: Consumers are very satisfied with the existing system of local authority verification. Has the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) introduced his Bill in response to consumer pressure? If consumers have written to him in their hundreds and thousands, why are they not writing to other right hon. and hon. Members?

Mr. Barron: That question is really directed at the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare, and I give way so that he may enlighten the Committee on that point.

Mr. Wiggin: If the hon. Gentleman had taken the trouble to read the Bill before coming to the House and making an attempt to filibuster it out of existence, he would have found that it has nothing to do with changing the law in relation to trading standards officers and their ordinary duties in monitoring machines that are used for the sale of goods. The Bill is solely about self-verification by people who have passed the most stringent independent tests. I wish I knew why there is such deep opposition to the Bill. If any right hon. or hon. Member had been prepared to discuss it with me, I would have been happy to try to meet their demands, as I did in respect of representations by trading standards officers and the Association of County Councils, who had the courtesy to approach me. The amendments are a result of those negotiations. I do not understand why such a body of opinion should be generated against an innocent little Bill that will help about a dozen British manufacturers.

Ms. Abbott: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Chairman. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare to accuse hon. Members with a deep and longstanding interest in weights and measures of filibustering.

Madam Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his point of view, and he is not offending against the Standing Orders of the House by expressing it.

Mr. Barron: I concur with the hon. Gentleman when he rightly points out that he was approached by interested bodies and subsequently proposed amendments to the Bill, to which I have no objection. If the Bill progresses, those amendments should obviously be incorporated. However, the hon. Gentleman makes mention only of those interested parties who approached him. One would have thought that any right hon. or hon. Member introducing legislation in this area would have consulted credible consumer associations—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Chairman: Order, there must be only one debate at a time in this Chamber. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has the Floor.

Mr. Wiggin: I repeat my earlier remark that the Eden committee was unanimous in its findings and that the Government responded to its recommendations. The Bill is the result of something that has already been agreed after consultations that took place two or three years ago.

Ms. Abbott: Not on this Bill.

Mr. Barron: The Eden committee was established in 1984 and comprised representatives of all interested parties, including manufacturers and installers, repairers, users, central and local government, and consumers, and had an independent chairman in Dr. Eden himself.

Let me ask the hon. Gentleman a direct question. Did the consumers—and we are here to represent them rather than anyone else on that committee—propose any change not covered by the hon. Gentleman's amendment to his Bill? The hon. Gentleman shakes his head? Let me ask him, then, why the Consumers Association—a very creditable organisation—now says that it is opposed to certain parts of the Bill?

Mr. Wiggin: I am sorry to say that, contrary to its reputation, the Consumers Association failed to ask for an explanation of the Bill. It has made a number of allegations which, frankly, are wrong. I have sent the association a detailed analysis of its objections, but if it had produced them earlier I could have enlightened it. I am forced to conclude that the association knows as little about the matter as the hon. Gentleman clearly does.

1.30 pm

Mr. Barron: I suppose that that remark is in order.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested that he should be consulted on high. I have just spent a good deal of time dealing with the Electricity Bill, another measure of interest to consumers. I shall divulge nothing except that extensive discussions have taken place between not only the Opposition but the Government—the Bill's promoters—and about 10 of the leading consumers' associations. The Government rightly consider it necessary to consult those associations about the changes imposed on consumers. There seems to be a contradiction here. If this is a Government Bill by another name, why is the hon. Gentleman, as a representative of the Government, saying, "You must come and see me. I am not prepared to contact you."?

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helen's, South): I hope that my intervention will not provoke another barrage of personal insults from the Conservative Benches. Such conduct is entirely unnecessary.

Is not the test of the Bill, and of clause 2 in particular, very simple? At present an independent body, with its own professional standards and codes of ethics and behaviour, carries out the testing and stamping of weighing machines. The Bill seeks to allow in-house testing and stamping by people who are not party to the training course run by that professional body, and thus to make in-house stamping the prerogative of the elite at the expense of the many—and, ultimately, at the expense of the consumer.

Mr. Barron: That is the truth. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare said earlier that nothing about the inspections would change, but if a new retail outlet was set up it would surely have to be inspected before it could trade, and under the Bill an authorised person could do that. The hon. Gentleman nods. That constitutes a change.

The hon. Gentleman said earlier—and it is fair comment—that this was only part of the recommendations of the Eden report. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman must be familiar with the briefing sent by the Consumers Association to all Members of Parliament, as he is the Bill's surrogate promoter. The association did indeed agree with the report. Its briefing states:

> "We welcomed the recommendations of the 'Eden Report on Metrological Control' when it was published in 1985. Indeed, Eden's proposals were remarkable, in being endorsed by all parties—manufacturers, inspectorate and consumer representatives alike."

After such strong endorsement by all the parties concerned, it is strange that we should be discussing a Bill that contains only part of the recommendations that were so widely endorsed.

The Consumers Association brief continues:

> "The Consumers Association's objection to the Bill is that it seeks to introduce only those recommendations which would be of benefit to those connected with the manufacturing industry, without adequate safeguards to protect the consumer."

If that is the case, every hon. Member ought to be worried that the Bill protects only industry. I accept that industry needs to be protected but the interests of industry should not be protected if consumer standards are likely to suffer. The Consumers Association's argument is good and strong and I am prepared to accept it. A more comprehensive measure should have been introduced.

Ms. Abbott: Is it not the case that the parliamentary adviser to the National Federation of Scale and Weighing Machine Manufacturers has completely failed to take on board the interests of the consumer? The Eden committee first sat in 1984. Its recommendations were published in June 1985. Between 1985 and 1989 the retail industry has moved forward. There are new products; there is also new packaging and new machinery. Does that not make even more pressing the case for proper consultation? Does that not make it even more regrettable that the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) failed to consult the interested parties before he introduced the Bill?

Mr. Barron: Yes, it is regrettable. Even the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare may have some regrets about the Bill not being more comprehensive, by taking into account the interests of consumers as well as the interests of British industry.

One of the main objections of the Consumers Association is to self-verification. It says:

"Self-verification should not be applied to installers and repairers until its success in relation to manufacturers has been assessed. Most manufacturers are in a position to ensure that adequate quality assurance and control measures are built into their manufacturing processes. This cannot be said for repairers, most of whom tend to be small businesses, often working away from their own premises and performing many different types of repair work on many different types of machine."

I raised that point earlier. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare nodded his head in appreciation of that very important point when I raised it earlier.

Mr. Waller: My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) has taken account of the proposed changes. Provisions relating to installers and repairers would not come into force immediately; they would be postponed. Some of the Eden committee's proposals will come before the House later, but there can be no guarantee that if the Bill is not passed account will then be taken of the provisions in the Bill. By preventing the Bill from passing into law, the kind of safeguards to which the hon. Gentleman has referred and which have been taken into account will not exist.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Member's intervention draws me back to clause 1, which I shall not discuss in detail as we are debating clause 2. At present, clause 1 does not stop the threat of that happening even after the amendments have been made. We keep returning to the fact that the parties involved in the investigations and the conclusions of the Eden report were broadly in agreement. Although I cannot speak for the Labour Front Bench, that suggests to me that if a comprehensive Bill that covered all issues had been produced there would have been all-party agreement in the House and such a Bill would have been passed in far less time than we have spent in Committee this morning discussing whether clause 2 should stand part of the Bill. Many questions arise from that, but I understand that they cannot be discussed in a debate on clause 2 stand part. If I were to ask or answer those questions, I should be moving away from the subject of the debate.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the intervention by the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) appeared to contain an element of blackmail suggesting that either we let the Bill through now, slightly amended, or those concessions will not appear in any future Bill? The main issue is how to protect the consumer, and threats are perhaps not the best way to do that.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend may well be right. Although I always listen with interest to anything said by Conservative members that is helpful to the debate, it may be that there is a certain threat on that matter. That is normally left to the usual channels and to Government Departments and not to procedural issues in Committee. Had the Bill been thought through properly and had the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare lobbied the Minister, it might have been thought that the proper place and time for the Bill was not on a Friday in private Members' time but from the Dispatch Box on another day, properly promulgated by the relevant Government Department instead of a private Member.

Mr. Cohen: Does my hon. Friend agree that the checks and balances for weights and measures for protecting consumers and assisting industry have existed for a long time and the Bill, which benefits the industry at the expense of the consumer, upsets those checks and balances? Does he agree that it would have been quite simple to include some protection for the consumer and, particularly, the local authority powers? In the four or five years since the Eden report, there have been plenty of opportunities to work out those measures.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is right, but the five-year gap is not the responsibility of the promoter of the Bill. It would be wrong to blame him for the deficiencies in the Bill which seeks to enact only certain provisions of the Eden report. The responsibility rests with the Department of Trade and Industry. Unfortunately, we cannot even blame the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs as he is a recent appointee, and a shock appointee, as I recall from the public comments made by some of his hon. Friends—I use the expression lightly—when he was appointed. The person who held his position during the years from 1985 is responsible for the fact that the Bill contains only some of the recommendations in the Eden report.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare has been open and honest about the fact that the Bill is designed more to help industry than consumers. That is why I oppose clause 2.

1.45 pm

Mr. Wiggin: The hon. Gentleman keeps saying that consumers will experience some expense. Does he seriously and honestly believe that the Department of Trade and Industry would smile on a Bill if it knew that there was the slightest shred of evidence that that was the case? He should bear in mind that several western European countries already have self-verification. Is he aware that the Community will be proposing self-verification in the near future? There is not a shred of evidence that the Bill will harm the consumer.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman will remember that, in one of his interventions during my speech, he accepted that, in some instances—especially after installation or repairs—some machinery has had to be adjusted after its inspection by the proper statutory authority. How can we give authorised persons a licence, even for an interim period, if we know that, in the past, they have got it wrong? That is where the protection of the consumer begins to weaken, and it is highlighted by the Consumers Association.

The hon. Gentleman should have consulted the Consumers Association before coming to the House. He did not do so and he has given his reasons. The association fears that, because trading standards officers have had to adjust machinery in the past, that machinery may not be accurate after the enactment of the Bill.

There are drawbacks about extending the licensing provisions to those who install the equipment. The Bill would remove the existing requirement for an inspector to be present when bar coding tills are installed. Bar coding tills are in use in many of our retail outlets. They inform the customer electronically of the price of the goods. One would need to have a mind like a calculator to remember

[Mr. Barron]

the price of the sugar when reaching the checkout because in a hypermarket the shelf could be a quarter of a mile away.

In those circumstances, it is important that the equipment is accurate at all times. It should not be left simply to the person who installs the machine. Consumers should not have to wait until the local authority trading standards officer has time to visit the supermarket or hypermarket to check the accuracy of the machine. If we are to look after consumers' interests, the first item purchased in a retail outlet using that system must show that the price is being recorded properly before the other items are purchased.

Mr. Bermingham: My hon. Friend has probably read, as I have, about the problems with bar coding. When prices change, one price can be displayed but another barred through so that one is charged the original price and not the displayed reduced price. What damage will be done if such problems are left to self-verification?

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I am not surprised that he raised it because he is not only an hon. Member but a member of the legal profession. I am sure he is well aware of the introduction of new technology into retailing and its effect on consumers, and of individual consumers who are in dispute with a retailer about the cost of an item.

Ms. Abbott: I am sure that my hon. Friend has read, as I have, the Government's response to the report of the Eden committee, entitled "Metrological Control of Equipment for Use for Trade". For the benefit of other hon. Members who may not have read it, I shall read a paragraph that has some bearing on the debate. It says:

"The action which the Government proposes to take on the Report will undoubtedly be helpful to industry. However, the Government will take no step which could compromise fair trading . . . The Government believes that the basis of fair trading is the acceptance by all parties that the regulatory framework is reasonable. It is therefore especially pleased that the Report was unanimous and that reform in this area can be accepted by all interested parties without controversy."

Does my hon. Friend agree that the reason for this morning's controversy is that Labour Members believe that the Bill will compromise fair trading, in complete contradiction to that paragraph in——

Madam Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Lady is making a long intervention. Has she concluded?

Ms. Abbott: Yes.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her intervention. She has much expertise in this sector. I suspect that her previous job as an elected member of a local authority gave her much practical experience, which I did not have before becoming an hon. Member, in overseeing trading standards. I lack such experience, but having been a consumer all my life gives me a direct interest in the contents and passage of the Bill.

The Consumers Association said that the appointed system—the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare has not dealt with this yet—has certain implications for local authorities. It says that more checks and inspections are required and that

"the Bill contains an admission that it could lead to less staff."

That point was made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, who said that other parts of the Bill could lead to losses of staff. The Consumers Association was concerned that

"Local authorities will also lose income which they currently receive from certifications. Such income offsets the expenditure incurred in maintaining their highly specialised and complex test equipment. Yet such equipment will still have to be maintained to test the work of non-licensed holders."

Another part of the Bill states that local authorities are likely to lose out. In this age of attacks on local authority expenditure, can authorities sustain a department with enough staff and equipment to test scales used by retail outlets? In years to come, will there be sufficient protection for the consumer? Current amendments to the Weights and Measures Act 1985 are defective.

Ms. Abbott: My hon. Friend has referred to possible cash losses for local authorities. He will be aware of this statement in the White Paper:

"The Government recognises that inspectors will need training for the additional functions connected with self-verification . . . It will discuss with local authorities how this should be organised and funded."

The Government are aware of the implications for local authorities. Have there been discussions with the local authorities about organisation and funding of special training for the inspectorate?

Mr. Barron: I am afraid that I cannot answer that question. If the Government, who have responsibility for these matters, had wanted to do something about the Eden committee's report, they would have introduced a comprehensive Bill containing all the answers and results of consultations with the Department of Trade and Industry. Instead, we have to guess whether the functions of trading standards officers in overseeing are sufficiently protected.

Mr. Cohen: I again take up the point about loss of local authority jobs, to which my hon. Friends the Members for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) have referred. Is there not a familiar vicious circle? There is a shortage of people doing this expert work; a wave of complaints because standards have dropped and the industry has taken liberties; and the Government say that the local authorities are not doing the job properly so they will take away those functions. That vicious circle is seen in other aspects of civil services where people should be protected. Is there not a danger in cutting jobs and thereby setting that train in motion?

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend has made a strong and precise point. He did not use the phrase "free market", but if the number of trading standards officers and their services were reduced, it would be open for people to say, "When you go to any of the major retail outlets using this equipment, you will be in the hands of the manufacturer, repairer, installer or retailer."

2 pm

There is one question above all about which consumers and the organisations that represent them are concerned. We are all, of course, well aware of the growth in the number of advice centres and consumer organisations. Those organisations have commented to me and, I am sure, to other hon. Members that they feel it is incomprehensible that out of the strong recommendations

in the Eden report, which were supported by the organisations, a selection of recommendations has been brought forward in the Bill. They fear, as I do, that if we accept the Bill, although some of its provisions are acceptable and there are sections of the British industry we want to encourage, we shall not see the other recommendations of the report carried out in legislation.

The Government, and especially the Department of Trade and Industry, have sat on the committee's conclusions for so long. They have now seen an avenue for some of them, but they dare not bring a Bill forward directly at the Dispatch Box because they have included only a few of the recommendations and ignored the others. For that reason, the clause should not stand part of the Bill and if there is a Division, I shall vote against it.

Mr. Cohen: I want to weigh in with my measured opposition to clause 2—if that is an appropriate way to start. We have had weights and measures regulations that have worked well over the years. They were initiated in the Magna Carta and what was got out of King John is being eroded under Queen Maggie.

There are inspectors of weights and measures working for local authorities throughout the country and I pay tribute to them. They do an outstanding job and they are unbiased. Clause 2 represents an erosion of their work and of their traditional and successful public service. I am pleased that my hon. Friends have taken the opportunity to scrutinise the Bill properly, because it would otherwise have gone through untouched and would have seriously eroded that public service. The Bill would have been a short measure in more ways than one.

Ms. Abbott: It is important to pay close attention to the recommendations of the Eden committee, to which hon. Members have often referred. The committee said, on the powers of the inspectors:

"It may be necessary to give inspectors additional powers in connection with their duties to undertake the quality audit of organisation."

Where in the Bill are such additional powers provided?

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend makes a good point about the Eden report. As has been said, the Bill is a partial implementation of that report. Only those parts that benefit industry have been taken and the Bill has not included anything that will benefit the consumer. My hon. Friend was right to mention that key complaint of many of the people who have objected to the Bill.

I apologise to the *Hansard* reporters who have been sending me notes since I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). The notes ask for copies of the letters from the county of Cleveland and from the London borough of Sutton. I have not been able to send those letters up, but shall do so when I have finished my speech because I want to quote from them again. I apologise for not having responded to the *Hansard* requests.

A letter from Mr. S. P. Jones, the professional assistant to Cleveland council, was sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). The letter makes several points and I shall briefly allude to them. It says:

"The bill by being a private members bill avoids the usual consultative process of a government measure and represents a particularly shabby manoeuvre by the DTI and interested parties."

That has already been mentioned, so I will not dwell on it. The measure erodes all the excellent work carried out over the years by a successful public service and the consultation process has been less than adequate. That is not a good policy to adopt.

Ms. Abbott: The key point is that the Bill is a shabby measure. When we look at the original Eden report, as most Opposition Members have done, we find that one of the recommendations was about a move away from self-regulation of the serving of beer towards some sort of inspection of beer measures. The report says:

"We recommend implementation of s. 19 of the 1979 Act on the measurement of beer or cider."

To avoid the debate about whether publicans should have any sort of inspection of control of the pouring of beer and to allow them to continue to self-regulate it is one of the reasons for this shabby private Member's Bill being introduced. One of the other recommendations in the Eden report——

Madam Deputy Chairman: Order. This is a long intervention from the hon. Lady.

Ms. Abbott: Let me just mention one recommendation. It says:

"We recommend that the whole field of measurement be reviewed to establish a rational approach to legal control; the Weights and Measures acts cover only part of the field."

That would avoid——

Madam Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Lady had a good crack of the whip this morning and she is taking a long time now in interventions.

Mr. Cohen: I take my hon. Friend's point, but I will not go down that road, except to say that when talking about drinks such as beer and wines, it is a case of "Cheers" for the manufacturers but not much in the way of cheer for the consumer.

The Consumers Association has said that it was not consulted and is very much against many aspects of the Bill. I have quoted what local authorities have said and shall continue to do so. They have said that they have not been properly consulted and that they are against the Bill. There has not been a good consultation process, but such consultation as there has been has elicited a hostile response to the clause. The Committee should take that properly into account. The letter from Cleveland county also says:

"The bill gives wide powers to the Minister who will make regulations through central agencies. The bill states that local authority manpower will be reduced. The inspectorate role will be transferred to central government."

That is the point about centralisation to which my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) referred earlier. He mentioned the provision for "an authorised person" to act as an inspector. I believe that the wording is immensely lax. An authorised person could, bluntly, be the agent of the manufacturer, repairer or installer. That provision certainly erodes the role of the independent inspector.

My hon. Friend also rightly referred to the centralisation of power in the Secretary of State. The Government are so dogmatic in their hostility to local authorities; they cut them back at every turn. Even when authorities are playing a good role, the Government cut them back. The Secretary of State, in this case, will take away the high standard role performed by inspectors for local authorities and vest the authority in himself. The Secretary of State will not be able to perform the same role

[Mr. Cohen]

as that carried out by little local authorities up and down the country. He cannot perform the same effective role as people on the ground floor in the local authority. Thus, the service will be worse and more open to abuse, as well as being less democratic. That action is designed to take away powers as well as jobs from local authorities. The county of Cleveland is quite right on that point. Its letter states:

"It selectively implements the Eden Report."

That point has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) in her intervention. The letter continues

"it undermines the role of local authorities in consumer protection. Eden advocated a statutory duty for local authorities to inspect weighing equipment at reasonable intervals which the Minister and Mr. Wiggin have ignored."

Absolutely essential to the Eden committee was the point of a statutory duty for local authorities to inspect equipment. The idea was to strengthen their hand. Had the hon. Gentleman wanted to introduce a measure that contained all the rest of the Eden committee's recommendations and was a Garden of Eden for industry, at least he should have included the statutory duty also recommended by the Eden committee, because that would have protected consumers by establishing the role of local authorities to protect them. It was wrong to ignore that recommendation. The letter continues:

"It substitutes self-regulation for independent check in a period when it is demonstrable that consumers require statutory protection enforced by independent inspection. This is the chief lesson of current food hygiene difficulties."

That independence is vital, but will be eroded as a result of the Bill.

As I have said in interventions, not only the county of Cleveland and Labour authorities object to this clause; there are objections right across the board. I have a letter from the London borough of Sutton, signed by the director of housing, health and consumer services. A copy was sent to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). The letter states:

"the Bill appears to be an extract of only those aspects of the Eden Committee recommendations which are of interest to the trade. The package of proposals recommended by the Eden Committee and negotiated by local authorities and the Department of Trade and Industry included a number of checks and balances in moving to a radically new system designed to protect the consumer and retailer purchaser. The present Bill takes no account of these arrangements and agreements. The Bill transfers all control powers from local authorities to the Secretary of State, with no statutory obligation to consult local Weights and Measures Authorities, and indeed there is an absence of adequate safeguards and sanctions to prevent improper use of the power to self-verify and/or abuse the licensing system."

That is a scathing comment by a Conservative-controlled London borough on the Bill's proposals.

2.15 pm

Mr. Bermingham: Do not all these objections, across the board, come from all shades of political opinion and all parts of the country, showing how widespread is the opposition to the Bill?

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend is right. That is shown also in the thick document from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, which seeks to put right clause after clause. We have already referred to the Consumers Association.

No one has yet mentioned heavy lorries, and the use of weighbridges. Parliament has been standing out against the Common Market, which wants to allow heavier lorries on our roads. I suspect that the Government will cave in in 1992 and these increasingly heavy juggernauts will destroy our roads. However, there is a danger that a weighbridge operator, producer or manufacturer could appoint as the authorised officer somebody who is sympathetic to the Common Market suggestion that we should have heavier lorries, and who will turn a blind eye to any deficiencies in the weighbridge facilities. Despite our opposition to them, we shall get these heavier lorries because of insufficient inspection.

The Spitalfields market is being relocated in my constituency, and we are trying to have a weighbridge installed there, partly to ensure that overweight lorries do not go to the market, and partly because overweight lorries already thunder through Leyton. The police, the local authority and others could use the weighbridge, but if it is not accurate because it is not in the interests of the manufacturers, repairers or installers that it should be, those efforts to get the weighbridge will be wasted.

What will happen if, as a result of this clause, the authorised person is appointed by the traders? It will not be in their interests to prosecute their suppliers. That loophole could ruin an advantageous process. There should be weighbridges all over London and other large cities to keep heavy lorries out. That should be strictly enforced by the local authority and proper standards officers. If the interests of those who become authorised persons do not lie in enforcing those standards, a dangerous loophole will result.

Local authorities need more resources to carry out this independent role and to have a statutory duty to inspect at reasonable intervals equipment in use for trade. I would favour local authorities having more power to ensure that consumers get a fair deal. The whole weights and measures issue is about checks and balances. I am not unsympathetic to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare and I understand his motivation, but the benefits must be balanced so that consumers are protected. That is what is missing in the Bill, which is the terrible mistake.

Mr. Wiggin: I appreciate that some trading standards officers may have approached the hon. Gentleman, but I should tell him, especially as he has only recently taken an interest in the Bill, that the Institute of Trading Standards Administration, which is the trading standards officers' organisation, agreed, after its discussions with me and after I agreed to amend the Bill, that the Bill should proceed. Therefore, if individual trading standards officers are concerned about the Bill, I believe that we can satisfy them. I hope that the hon. Gentleman would not for a moment consider that that institute would approve of a Bill that is likely to have the effects described by him.

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Gentleman, in common with many other hon. Members, has a honeyed tongue and I am sure that he was able to persuade the institute to support the Bill. What did he say to it about consumers? Did he repeat what his hon. Friend the Minister said, which was that the part of the Eden report concerning consumers could be considered by Parliament in the future once this Bill is out of the way?

Mr. Wiggin *indicated assent*——

Mr. Cohen: That may be so, but there is considerable doubt about whether there will be a subsequent Bill. We have already waited five years. Would the institute be so pleased with the Bill if it got the impression that there would not be another Bill that benefited consumers? I believe that the most likely course is that no such subsequent Bill will be introduced. Industry is pushing the Government to introduce Bills such as this, and consumer interests come way down the order. I suspect that the institute would not be so keen if it realised that that was the reality.

We need a system of proper checks and balances between the consumer and industry. Hon. Members who have contributed to the debate have done a good job in applying parliamentary scrutiny. We should think again and bring forward something that protects consumers. That is why I oppose the clause.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): The one thing that the Bill forgets is that we live in changing times and that the method of measurement and the types of scales used by the Government change as the days change——

Mr. Forth: That is what the Bill is all about.

Mr. Bermingham: I note the Minister's prompt response. I wonder how soon we will have television cameras in here so that people can see the sartorial elegance of the Minister today in his red shirt, which no doubt reflects the victory at the Vale of Glamorgan.

Times are changing when it comes to weights and measures, but, regrettably, the Bill is not designed to meet such changes.

Mr. Wiggin: It is.

Mr. Bermingham: It is not because it is moving towards self-verification. That may make the Minister smile—it must be one piece of humour in what is an otherwise sad day. If we have a process of self-verification, a series of problems is created. First, if the only person to verify the machine is the manufacturer, when the machine goes wrong, as undoubtedly machines sometimes do—*[Interruption.]* I appreciate that the Minister is displaying his usual good manners by talking out loud while others are speaking. I had hoped to catch his eye as his attention to the subject may assist the House. He may be able to intervene from time to time and correct us if we go wrong. He has been remarkably silent in the past two hours——

Mr. Forth: Five hours.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister has sat silent for five hours. That must be a record. Someone has managed to shut this Minister up for five solid hours. The House should repeat this Committee week in, week out, as that would be to the benefit of the consumer in the long run.

Much of the repair work will be done not only on weighing scales. The Bill is about not only weighing scales but all sorts of machines. Bar coding machines have already been mentioned, as have other electronic weighing devices. My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) made a point about difficulties with weighbridges. There are numerous other types of measuring devices.

I take this opportunity of reminding the Committee that the argument started not with Magna Carta but with the grain mountains in ancient Egypt and the arguments with the merchants. The argument about who shall check the weights, and who shall verify the checkers of the weights, is as old as that—and it is a long argument.

The difficulty arises with the question of repair and maintenance. It is all very well major manufacturers saying, "If you buy our weighing scales, we offer an after-sales and repair service," but that may be of no value to the small corner shopkeeper whose scales break down. That shopkeeper knows the risks that he runs if he gives short weight, and that a prosecution may be brought against him.—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are at it again, Miss Boothroyd. This time it is the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) who is causing the noise, but let us not worry about that.

At present, the small corner shopkeeper can telephone a local repairman, who will come along to fix the scales, which the inspector can then verify. However, if that shopkeeper is wholly dependent upon a major manufacturer's repair service, he may find that his weighing equipment is not repaired as soon as he wants.

Mr. Corbyn: Having just returned to the Chamber, I hesitate to interrupt my hon. Friend, but it occurs to me that it would be wrong for manufacturers to be solely responsible for the fine determination of the accuracy of their weighing equipment. If they are, they will have a vested interest. What is needed is an independent, non-privatised, public body of integrity responsible for examining all weighing and measuring equipment. Weights and measures legislation was introduced in the first place to protect the consumer against being ripped off by unscrupulous vendors or by the use of inaccurate equipment.

Mr. Bermingham: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. At the heart of the argument on clause 2 is who should verify whether or not a weighing machine is accurate. The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare says that a recognised manufacturer with a large enough turnover, or a new manufacturer who is large enough and who wants to join the club, will be permitted to verify its own machines and that there will be no need for independent inspections.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend rushes over the question I wanted him to answer. Another point that occurs to me concerns people wanting to enter into the manufacturing of precision weighing and measuring equipment. There are firms in my own constituency that manufacture some precision equipment of that kind. How will a new firm setting up to manufacture precision weighing or measuring equipment fit into the grand scheme of things as provided by the Bill? Will it be ousted by a cartel of major manufacturers preventing any new manufacturer entering the market?

Mr. Bermingham: If such a firm were unacceptable to the existing manufacturers, it would have to operate outside them and be subject to the old local authority inspection system. That may make the firm less competitive, which is a disadvantage that the Bill creates and which does not exist at present. Under the present law, all measuring and weighing machines are verified by trading standards officers who are non-partisan and completely independent. That is the beauty of the existing system, and it is why the trading standards officer in my constituency contacted me about the Bill. That is why I,

[Mr. Bermingham]

along with many of my hon. Friends, remain utterly opposed to clause 2 and hope that if a Division is called the Committee will vote against it.

The test is very simple: do we believe in independent verification or in self-verification? If we believe in independent verification—the same verifier for all, regardless of manufacture or bearer—there may be a chance of some equality being applied to the test of verification. If, on the other hand, we leave it to the major manufacturers, what will happen to the newcomers—as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) pointed out——

It being half-past Two o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again on Friday 12 May.

Private Members' Bills

INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ORGANISATIONS (REGISTRATION) BILL

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment, read the Third time and passed.

RIGHT OF SILENCE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ABORTION (AMENDMENT OF GROUNDS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ROAD TRAFFIC (BREATH TESTS) BILL

Order read for resumed adjourned debate on Question —[24 February]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 May.

SCARCE RESOURCES (CONSERVATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

AMUSEMENT MACHINES (PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

EMPTY PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY AID BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ABORTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 May.

NET BOOK AGREEMENT (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ABORTION (FINANCIAL BENEFITS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 23 June.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of Order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May we know which hon. Member objected to my Bill? I was not sure who it was, and I should be grateful if you could let me know.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not the business of the Chair to inform hon. Members of objections. I am sure that the hon. Member is alert enough to work that out for himself.

SAFETY IN CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ABORTION (RIGHTS OF ANCILLARY WORKERS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

PROTECTION OF RESIDENTS IN RETIREMENT HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 May.

INSTALLATION OF SMOKE DETECTORS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

No day named.

REQUIREMENTS OF WRITING (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 May.

ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

ABORTION (RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 July.

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 May.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 12 May.

AGE OF LEGAL CAPACITY (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

No day named.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 8th May—

(1) if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to Dock Work Bill (Allocation of Time) have not been concluded before Seven o'clock, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings; and

(2) the Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, for five hours after it has been entered upon.

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th May, the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Income Tax may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Palace of Julius Agricola

2.36 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): This Adjournment debate is about an exceedingly important national issue. The title of the debate

"safeguarding the site of the Palace of Julius Agricola, London"

is not entirely accurate. The site in question lies within the area identified in the 1960s as the Roman Huggin hill bath site. It is along the Upper Thames street, but in Roman times it was located on the Thames waterfront.

I am reliably informed that the building was probably the largest public baths complex in Roman London and that it was constructed around 80 AD, during the time of Julius Agricola, the Roman governor of Britain. The complex used a highly sophisticated heating system. I have been informed, quite interestingly, that such a system was not seen again in London until the 19th century. One of the archaeologists to whom I spoke said that London had to wait until the advent of the London county council before public baths on the scale and sophistication of these Roman baths were once again constructed in London.

The baths complex stretches under Dominant house —the part that we are discussing today—and continues under Fur Trade house, the adjacent building which is due to be redeveloped within the next 18 to 24 months.

Early in 1986 the corporation of London received a planning application to redevelop Dominant house, of which it is the freeholder. Modifications were made to the original proposals as the corporation mistakenly believed that the site had already been scheduled. Scheduling was hurriedly approved in June 1986, in advance of conditional planning permission which was granted in July of that year.

The scheduling recommended by English Heritage, the popular title of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, said that the caldarium in the courtyard area between Dominant house and Huggin hill was very well preserved, with walls over 2 m high. The bath house remains under Dominant house itself were thought to be seriously damaged during the 1965 building operation. That wrong judgment was later corrected, but I suspect that in that particular error we see many of the seeds of the complications and the confusions that arose later.

The site's scheduled status having been established, conditional planning permission was given subject to the scheduled monument being adequately protected and preserved and made accessible to members of the public. Subsequent discussions between the corporation planning department, English Heritage and the developers failed to agree on a means of displaying any part of the site. Neither the City nor the Hammerson group, the developers, were willing to undertake the maintenance, and, unfortunately, English Heritage was unable to do so.

The City corporation, however, insisted that revised plans be approved by the Court of Common Council and English Heritage before any works were begun, if further excavations proved archaeologically significant. In 1988 the archaeologists carried out a series of trial works and it was established that the monument was in excellent condition and that the construction of Dominant house had caused very little damage. Originally it had been thought that the 1965 construction had seriously damaged the site.

English Heritage then wrote to Hammerson's architect on 7 September 1988 saying that the site was

"a major archaeological site of national importance, and one where the implications of the proposed new development deserve the fullest consideration in the light of the preliminary archaeological investigation."

The letter continued

"The Museum of London's work within the loading bay indicates that there are exceptionally deep and complex archaeological deposits including several phases of Roman building."

Long discussions then took place between the Museum of London and Hammerson throughout the latter part of last year as they attempted to agree a level of funding for the major excavations and a timescale.

On 22 December 1988 the Department of the Environment granted the developers scheduled monument consent allowing excavation for a period up to six months from the date work was begun. That is when the real error was made and when the confusion started. I remind the House that English Heritage first thought that the site had been extensively damaged. It then discovered that it had not been damaged and was a site of national significance. Some experts are now saying that it is one of the most impressive Roman sites in northern Europe. At that point everyone should have stopped and reflected and considered precisely what needed to be done. Unfortunately, that did not happen. It appears that the Department of the Environment, presumably on the advice of English Heritage, gave scheduled monument consent to the developers, which, if I understand the wording correctly, is a rather nice way of saying that they could knock it down.

The Museum of London began work on 3 January this year, with an agreement to get off the site by 31 May. That is why this Adjournment debate is so important. We are now only a few weeks away from the destruction of a Roman site unequalled in preservation, quality and size anywhere in London, yet the site represents only 20 per cent. of the total complex.

It appears that destruction is absolutely assured unless the Minister takes decisive political action now. I know that she has visited the site, and we are all grateful for that. I am quite sure that she will be as impressed as I was and as everyone else who has seen the site. I believe that her praises will be proclaimed throughout the House if she can devise a formula to save those wonderful Roman remains. There is no excuse for not saving them. A whole range of options have been presented to the Government and to the other bodies concerned.

Technically speaking, English Heritage gave such appalling advice to Ministers that if scheduled monument consent were now to be revoked, English Heritage is likely to be liable to pay compensation to the Hammerson property development group. That would be unrealistic. I am also worried that Hammerson is trying it on by claiming compensation as high as £7 million. English Heritage has only about £10 million for archaeological work throughout the country. Hammerson's is a very wealthy property organisation. It could do its corporate image a great deal of good if it were to ride in like a white knight and save the site. Conversely it will attract a great deal of public odium if it persists in destroying the site after 31 May this year.

The City of London could intervene. It could save the site by withdrawing planning consent or insisting that the site be preserved in a revised Hammerson development project. There is a number of ways to do that. It could offer the Hammerson group some form of planning gain. It should do something about it. It is scandalous to think that in the City's 800th anniversary—its heritage year—it seems unwilling to lift a finger to save an archaeological jewel nearly 2,000 years old.

Why has part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 never been extended to cover the City of London? If any area of the country cries out for extension of that Act, it is the City of London. If part II were extended, it would give some additional protection to sites such as Huggin Hill. Perhaps I am just a cynical old politician but I suspect that the City does not want that extension because it might obstruct the highly profitable deals that it does with property speculators within the square mile.

The property speculators, particularly Hammerson property group, are knocking down Dominant house, which has been there only since 1965. It was a speculative office block and it is being knocked down to build yet another speculative office block. That is just what we need in the City of London. It will probably last another 20 or 25 years before being knocked down to make way for yet another speculative office block. In order to build the new block, the Hammerson group is ready to destroy a vital part of our national history.

The Roman history presented by the Huggin Hill complex belongs to the nation as a whole. It is our history, not Hammerson's property, and we have to move to protect it. Whatever legal rights the property group might have, it has no moral right to destroy that site. I do not see why a bunch of property speculators, behaving like up-market Arthur Daleys should be allowed to put their wretched profits before our history.

Whatever else emerges from this issue, Parliament must take action to prevent such a potential disaster from occurring in the future. I shall make a few suggestions to the Minister in that respect. We need new legislation to plug the obvious gaps that the case has revealed. It should be compulsory for any developer proposing work in areas designated to be of national archaeological significance —that must be an area such as the City of London—to carry out, at their own expense, a full archaeological survey before the planning authority even considers granting outline planning consent.

If sites of national significance are uncovered, the Government, on behalf of the nation, should provide the necessary protection and funding. English Heritage has nothing in the way of funds. A total of £10 million does not go far when one is having to look after the archaeology of the entire country. In this case, English Heritage has been found wanting. It does not have the resources to rectify its appalling mistake.

I do not believe that any other country in Europe—not even Albania, for God's sake—would be as irresponsible as Britain with regard to its historic monuments. If between them, the Government, English Heritage, The City and Hammerson fail to save this wonderful historic and unique Roman site at Huggin Hill, they will stand condemned of perpetrating an act of criminal folly. They will have acted like true Vandals of old.

I have a lot of time for the Minister. I know that she will not let me down because I can see it in her face. The Minister cannot and must not allow the site to be destroyed. I invite her now to say what action she proposes to take. If she initiates action to save the site, she will deserve the country's thanks and I will be the first one in the House to lead the applause. If she fails, she must take her share of the blame which present and future generations will attach to her. The opportunity is hers and I hope that she will grasp it with both hands.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for raising this extremely important subject. I am well aware of the close interest he has shown in the site, which, as he said, I had an opportunity to visit.

I should like to mention the local Member of Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who has a particular knowledge and interest in the subject. He studied Agricola as a special subject for his university degree. He is also chairman of the standing conference of archaeological unit managers and the British Property Federation group, which has played an important part in these matters.

I should like to make some general remarks before dealing with the specific matters raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. Archaeological remains have always excited much interest and wonder. Our ancestors saw Stonehenge as the work of giants or magicians because they could not conceive that such great stones could have been erected by mortal men.

The growth of archaeology as a scientific discipline over the past century or so means that specialists can tell us much more. They can analyse structures, buildings and artefacts, from which we can learn an increasing amount about our forefathers, their technology, their way of life, their housing and trading contacts. It is no surprise that at the Museum of London, which has played such a part in these matters, up to 400 archaeologists a year work and look at the remains and ruins around the area.

Archaeology is important to our shared understanding of the past and the knowledge that it gives us, but there is an inevitable conflict, to which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West referred. As modern archaeological methods enable us to retrieve ever more information, so modern building methods, with deep foundations, mean that we are more likely to disturb or destroy archaeological remains as we develop our contemporary civilisation. Further, we are more aware of what we are destroying.

Attention is always paid to how much we should preserve. Do we want London to be a modern, living city or a square mile of archaeological remains? That is a difficult question. The past informs the present, but we cannot have a present without a future.

There are many encouraging signs. Over the past few years, archaeologists and developers have increasingly been working together, gaining a better understanding of each other's works. Only recently, another site at York caused much interest. It was thought to be the palace of Septimus Severus, and I also visited that site. I am glad to say that from that a success story has emerged. As a result of goodwill and co-operation, developers have agreed to redesign foundations to preserve the archaeology. As the

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

hon. Member for Newham, North-West rightly said, a formula must be devised to make that happen in as many places as possible.

Only last week I had an opportunity to address a conference organised by the British Property Federation and the standing conference of archaeological unit managers. Those organisations have produced a valuable code of practice, which has done much to reduce conflicts between archaeologists and developers. I was encouraged to see how the partnership is increasingly working between the two sides. Of course consensus and co-operation is never as newsworthy as conflict, but about £14 million a year is provided voluntarily by developers to help finance archaeological discovery. Co-operation and discussion are essential.

The site has been referred to as the palace of Julius Agricola, and it may be that my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South will be able to offer further substantiation of that. There is disagreement among specialists about the precise ownership of the original building. I am advised that the quality of the remains suggests that the building was designed for an official of high standing. It appears to have been built towards the end of the first century AD but demolished by the Romans 200 years later.

The site, as the hon. Gentleman said, was identified in the 1960s from excavation before redevelopment, which revealed parts of an extensive Roman bath complex, much of which was in a good state of preservation. It was scheduled in 1986. Scheduling, as the House well knows, means that a monument is identified as being of national importance. It does not necessarily mean that a site must be preserved for all time, but it means that consent must be sought from the Secretary of State before any works take place which would disturb the monument and even before repairs to a standing monument. It is a stringent procedure which gives a full opportunity for all the implications to be considered before a decision is made and allows for different options of preservation, either in situ or by record, to be made in the light of the circumstances of the case.

In 1986, we received an application to demolish Dominant house and to erect a new office block on the site. Before deciding on the consent, we had to make an evaluation. We required the evaluation to enable us to assess, with the benefit of fuller knowledge, the effect of the development on the remains. That evaluation, carried out by the Museum of London over three months in 1988, suggested that the remains on the development site in the trial area had already been damaged by building in the 1960s and by a large Victorian sewer.

On that basis, English Heritage advised that preservation by record would be an adequate response. Some parts of the site were to be preserved by bridging over them. The scheduled monument consent was therefore granted in December 1988, subject to a condition that up to six months should be allowed for archaeological investigation by the Museum of London, which had done the original assessment, before the development could proceed. It was given on the best information available at the time and in good faith. It is that archaeological investigation required by the consent which is taking place, funded by the developers to the tune of £500,000, and which has revealed remains which, as the hon. Gentleman has said, are more extensive and better preserved than the previous evaluation had suggested. This has led to the genuine dilemma that is being faced.

Intensive discussions have been taking place between the different parties involved to consider the possible options. Indeed, such discussions are going on even as we speak. I fully endorse this approach. I have said that I share the hon. Gentleman's hope and aspiration that we should be able to devise a formula. I have made it clear that it is essential that the developers and archaeologists keep talking. Clearly, a negotiated solution that enables the remains to be preserved while allowing the developers to proceed with their office block would be the ideal solution which would satisfy the interests of both sides as well as the public.

The remains under Dominant house are only a small proportion—some 20 per cent.—of the total site. The remainder of the site, 80 per cent., lies beneath adjoining buildings and is not currently under threat. I assure the House that any application for scheduled monument consent which affected the remainder of the site would be considered extremely carefully. Indeed, the intensive recording of this site which has been taking place in recent months and which the hon. Gentleman and I visited will contribute to a wider understanding of the rest of the remains, whatever the outcome.

I appreciate that preservation by record does not so easily satisfy the genuine and legitimate interest of the public as would preservation of the remains or even their public display, but it ensures that the knowledge which they represent is recorded and preserved. We know much more about Roman London now than we did before this excavation, and that is a tangible gain which will not be lost.

It is important to point out that this site is not the only civil Roman bath site even in the City of London. Another major scheduled Roman bath complex lies only about half a mile away, in Lower Thames street—which is probably well known to my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South—and is well preserved in the basement of an office building, where a major programme of conservation is about to start. There are other complexes elsewhere, such as the well-known ones at Bath, which I visited last year, those at Wroxeter and at Jewry hill, Leicester, both in guardianships to English Heritage, others at Exeter and the Roman palace of Fishbourne.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister not accept that the expert advice now available, which was not, unfortunately, available at the time, suggests that this complex is the most remarkable in this country notwithstanding the fact that there are other sites close to it? That does not detract from the significance of the site.

Mrs. Bottomley: Much as I applaud the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm, I cannot claim that our expert advisers have suggested that the site is of quite such unique value. I am not in any way trying to detract from the site's importance, but there are other sites and, as archaeologists will know, there are always disagreements and debates about how one find can be weighed against another.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the role of the City of London to revise planning consent. That is primarily a matter for the City of London, as the local planning

authority, and I know that it has been involved in discussions. Similarly, the hon. Gentleman talked about requiring developers compulsorily to finance archaeology. The developers are already providing £14 million for archaeology on top of the £7 million—sizeable figures—provided by English Heritage. We believe that, in general, the voluntary principle is working well in these matters.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to designation as an area of archaeological importance. The AAI provision of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 provides a mandatory basis for up to four and half months of archaeological investigation before development may proceed. It does not entail a financial commitment. On scheduled sites, such as this, we can already impose conditions requiring archaeological investigation and, of course, in this case we required six months. As has been said, the developers helped to finance that. The AAI provisions do not provide the money and do not require preservation. We may or may not have got those provisions right. English Heritage has been reviewing their operation for us and we have recently received its advice, which we shall be considering carefully in the light of this and other cases. As the provisions stand, they would not have made a difference to this case.

We have put the case into context. The hon. Gentleman referred to revoking the consent. Revocation would lead to a requirement for English Heritage to pay compensation for any costs incurred that are made abortive by the revocation. It would be costly—probably running to several million pounds. Yet English Heritage's budget for archaeology in the whole country last year was £7 million. The work of English Heritage includes such important and varied projects as the Raunds project, studying a multi-period landscape in Northamptonshire, examination of an early prehistoric site at Boxgrove and an ongoing study at Fishergate in York of mixed Roman, Viking and mediaeval remains. Priorities have to be set and decisions taken.

Preliminary figures suggest that the cost of redesigning the basement of Dominant house would be extremely costly and would run into several million pounds.

Mr. Banks: They can afford it.

Mrs. Bottomley: It raises important principles and there is the question of the ongoing relationship between developers and archaeologists. As I made clear, discussions are continuing between all the parties involved and in consultation with English Heritage, our adviser on such matters. I shall be watching developments carefully. I fully applaud and appreciate the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for the subject. As Minister with responsibility for heritage, it is all too rare that I have the opportunity to discuss such matters in the House. As we move forward at a fast rate of change, all of us appreciate the importance of studying our past, of archaeology and of our heritage. Like him, I very much hope that a way can be found to accommodate all the interests at the site.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past Three o'clock

House of Commons

Monday 8 May 1989

The House met at half past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Unfit Housing

1. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he intends to introduce to tackle the problems of unfit houses in the south Wales valleys.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): Since 1979, more than 61,000 homes in the valleys area have been improved at a cost of over £152 million. Over the three years of the programme for the valleys, we expect, on average, to see the renovation of some 10,700 valley homes per year. The last Labour Government were unable to match that average rate for the whole of the Principality during their last term in office.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that in the Rhondda alone, 5,000 people are on the waiting list for improvement grants and that it is estimated that 18,000 houses in the valleys need improvement grants, at a total cost of about £200 million? It is not the juggling of money, but new resources for valley communities that we require. Does the Minister accept that the con-trick of the Secretary of State—the valleys initiative—is no more acceptable in the Rhondda than it was to the electors of Pontrypridd or the Vale of Glamorgan?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman's question is extraordinary. Clearly, he did not listen to my reply. He has not understood that 10,000 new homes will be built under the initiative, that it has been welcomed by all local authorities, industrialists and trade unionists, and that other people have rightly given it a firm welcome as bringing a new spotlight to Wales, which the hon. Gentleman seems to be willing to deny.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that if one is going to make progress with unfit houses in the valleys of Wales, one needs a policy for housing—an advantage not shared by the Labour party? What progress does my hon. Friend expect housing associations to make in dealing with unfit houses in Wales?

Mr. Grist: The progress will be considerable. Under the programme for the valleys, about £8·6 million of special funding will be made available through Housing for Wales for approved development programmes in that area.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: What provisions does the Minister intend to make for those who have already applied for improvement grants? Will he ensure that such people will be catered for, in addition to new people coming on to the scheme from 1 April 1990?

Mr. Grist: I am assured by the councils concerned that if applications have been approved, they will be able to fit them in before the new scheme comes into play.

Mr. Murphy: Why cannot the Minister accept that all responsible housing associations and similar bodies in Wales are saying that his means-tested improvement grants will mean that fewer people will take up the grants and that our housing stock is bound to suffer? Cannot he see that our south Wales valleys will reject this policy in the same way as they rejected the rest of the Government's policies in the county council elections last week?

Mr. Grist: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be careful in what he says on this matter. I hope that he will tell his constituents—as I hope that his hon. Friends will —that the scheme produced under our new legislation will be the most generous ever, giving grants of up to 100 per cent.—which have never been available before—to those least able to pay. That will mean that about 54,500 houses in Wales will be eligible for 100 per cent. grants.

Sheepmeat Regime

2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policy towards any measures arising from the current review of the sheepmeat régime which could disadvantage Welsh producers.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I welcome the initiative to create a unified Community sheepmeat market, which offers the prospect of better access to continental markets. However, we will continue to resist changes that would discriminate against producers in Wales and will seek to secure arrangements that will allow free and fair competition, provide support at reasonable cost and thus enable the industry in Wales to benefit from its natural production advantages and its efficiency.

Mr. Jones: Does the Secretary of State accept that the 1988 agreement on sheepmeat stabilisers and the ewe premium was the result of short-term political expediency and was not in the long-term interests of either sheep producers or consumers in Wales? Will the Secretary of State now say to the people of Wales that he will use his good offices to ensure that the sheep sector in Wales is not damaged as the final result of the agreement on the sheep regime?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I assure the hon. Gentleman that those views on the future of the sheepmeat regime are shared by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I have no doubt that we shall reach an agreement that will secure the continuation of sheep farming on the hills of Wales on a proper viable basis.

Mr. Ron Davies: Did the Minister see Commissioner MacSharry on BBC Wales yesterday? The Commissioner made it quite clear that the variable premium would have to be phased out by 1992. Does the Minister accept that if that happens, it will be a hammer blow to the small family farms which form the basis of the economic and social life

of much of upland Wales? If he accepts that those will be the consequences of the loss of the variable premium, will he press in Cabinet for the adoption of the measures that are available to the United Kingdom Government under the structures programme to assist by some means of direct compensation?

Mr. Walker: Whatever Mr. MacSharry said, I remember the immense hostility expressed by the Opposition when, as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I introduced the variable premium scheme. I am glad that they have at last paid tribute to that scheme. Having introduced that scheme, I wish to ensure that if there are to be changes in it, it continues to secure the viability of sheep farming in Wales.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Wyn Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of people in full-time employment in Wales in June 1979; and what are the present figures.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Griffiths: I am sorry that the Secretary of State does not feel able to give us that information. The figures that I have secured from the Library show that more than 100,000 fewer full-time jobs exist in Wales than existed in 1979. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that it is because of that poor record on creating jobs that the electors of Pontypridd and the Vale of Glamorgan turned their backs on, and voted so resoundingly against, his vice-regal progress?

Mr. Walker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the figures are not available. He asked for the full-time employment figures, and there are no separate figures available for full-time male employment in Wales. That is why I could not meet his request, although I am delighted to answer the question. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should make such remarks about a Government under whom unemployment has fallen by 54,000 in the past two years and, given that inward investment is at an all-time high, I can understand the Opposition's discomfort at our success.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Can my right hon. Friend give figures to show the improvement in the strength of the work force during the past two years?

Mr. Walker: The civilian work force has increased by 35,000, with a substantial increase both in the numbers attending places of higher education and in those on Government training programmes. Moreover the number of self-employed people is now rising sharply.

Mr. Foot: If the comparative figures for people in full-time employment are available for England—as they are—why are similar figures not available for Wales?

Mr. Walker: The figures for those in employment, as opposed to the unemployed, are given in a survey that does not give separate figures for part-time and for full-time employment.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that Wales is holding its share of inward investment, as compared with other parts of the United Kingdom? Will he give us the latest figures for the number of jobs created by overseas companies that have set up in the Principality?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. Wales's share of inward investment in the United Kingdom, in terms of related new jobs, was 20 per cent. in 1987. I am pleased to say that we have just received the provisional figures for 1988, which show that our share has increased to 22 per cent. of all inward investment in the United Kingdom. That compares with 6 per cent. in 1979.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is it not the case that Wales now has 10 per cent. fewer jobs than in 1979, while East Anglia has enjoyed a 25 per cent. increase, and that economic growth and industrial investment in Wales has grown by only 1·4 per cent. per annum since 1979—only half the growth rate in the prosperous south-east of England? That does not amount to the economic miracle proclaimed by the Secretary of State. How does the Cabinet Minister, with supreme trumpeting skills, explain the Labour party's magnificent victories in the Vale of Glamorgan and in the county of Clwyd? Is the right hon. Gentleman to blame, or is it the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the NHS White Paper or the privatisation of water? I note the right hon. Gentleman's remarks in yesterday's *Sunday Times* to the effect that NHS issues were a factor. But, on St. David's day, he openly boasted in the House that, in Cabinet Committee, he himself helped to fashion the NHS's approach.

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that these questions are about employment.

Mr. Walker: Rumour has it that the Vale of Glamorgan result was totally due to the enormous impact which the hon. Gentleman made on the campaign. *[Interruption.]* I remind the hon. Gentleman that the fall in the Conservative vote in the 1986 Fulham by-election was rather larger than the fall in vote in the Vale of Glamorgan. We still won back the Fulham constituency by a large majority at the next general election.

Mr. Soames: When it comes to trumpeting, will my right hon. Friend take up a suggestion which may help employment in Wales? Is he aware that this is the first time for many hundreds of years that there is no full-time regular battalion of soldiers stationed in Wales? Will he have a word with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and make sure that the military are properly represented in Wales, as they always have been and should be?

Mr. Walker: Yes. My right hon. Friend is taking this matter fully into consideration. I hope that he will be able to make some proposals.

Wales Tourist Board

4. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is undertaking, or plans to undertake, any review of the work of the Wales tourist board, analogous to the review of the tourist industry currently being undertaken in England; whether he has received any representations concerning the future structure, responsibilities and powers of the Wales tourist board; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I have no such plans. However, a number of interested bodies and individuals have made representations about the review in England and its possible implications for Wales.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister recall that, last June, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched a development strategy for tourism in Wales on the basis of considerable investment over a five-year period, based on section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969? Is he aware also that, from March of this year, there has been considerable agreement between local authorities in Wales and the Wales tourist board on investment of over £8 million for the Wales tourist board, to trigger a total investment of £73 million over the coming five years? Given that, will he give an assurance that the basis of that investment—section 4 of the Act—will definitely remain for the future?

Mr. Roberts: Of course. That is one of the reasons why the review was confined to England. As the hon. Gentleman said, a five-year development strategy has been evolved by the Wales tourist board, and it is expected that it will trigger off about £73 million of private sector money and create 2,000 jobs. Therefore, there is every reason for us to continue as we are.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 9 March 1979, the number of unemployed claimants in the Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 5,697, 17,480 and 107,696, respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that, if he blows that trumpet much louder, we shall all suffer from industrial deafness? Is not the reality just a little different, considering that over the past decade, there has been a fall in investment of 2·7 per cent., compared with a 22·6 per cent. increase in the south-east of England, that our regional aid has been cut from £209 million to £104 million, and that our growth rate was only 1·4 per cent. over the decade, compared with double that in the south-east of England? Is it not time that we had a bit of modesty from the Government spokesman?

Mr. Walker: When it comes to modesty about Wales, there is nobody better than the hon. Gentleman. He plays down the place the entire time. I am delighted, in spite of playing a different tune, that as a result of what is happening at the moment, unemployment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency has dropped by 40 per cent. in the past two years. Inward investment has been at a record high. I shall continue trumpeting around the world to improve the situation still further.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Secretary of State explain why unemployed people in my constituency received a document through their letter boxes this morning entitled:

"Your guide to the community charge"?

Why did it arrive this morning, and not last Monday morning before the county council elections? Was it an unacceptable election manifesto for Conservatives at county council elections?

Mr. Walker: I am sorry about any depression that the hon. Gentleman may have as a result of the county council elections. I recognise that in parliamentary and county council elections his party is having a pretty rough time at present. I am sure that that distribution was arranged by an office, but I do not know whether it is bringing good news or bad news, because I have not read the leaflet.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Secretary of State pay particular attention to the problems of one group of workers and staff who are facing redundancy—the disabled people in Remploy factories in south Wales? Is he aware of the proposal that a number of staff who have been made technically redundant will have to reapply for their jobs? I remind him that we are talking about disabled people. If the Secretary of State has not heard about that proposal, will he call for a report and ensure that a bit of compassion is shown towards those employed in Remploy factories.

Mr. Walker: Yes, I shall certainly look into that. My last association with a Remploy factory was to open a new one, which meant a major extension for Remploy's activities. If there is a problem, I shall look into it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend recall the winter of discontent in 1979 and its effect on jobs in Wales? What does he think will be the effect on inward investment prospects in Wales if the policy of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) of scrapping the Conservative Government's industrial relations legislation and allowing secondary picketing were to become law?

Mr. Walker: Wales, which has 5 per cent. of the population, currently gets 22 per cent. of all inward investment, which is a remarkable record and one which will not be helped or assisted in any way by the suggestion that what Wales wants to do is to return to nationalisation and to control by the trade unions.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Thatcherite single economic dogma has left significant weaknesses in the Welsh economy? I refer, for example, to the utter failure of the Government's training measures as instanced by the CBI in Wales, and to the fact that unemployment stands 45,000 higher than it did in 1979? Was not Lord Crickhowell correct in stating that there are no new policies, no new initiatives and little change in the scale of public spending?

Mr. Walker: We currently have record investment in the valleys by a long way and we are spending £1 million per week on training programmes in the valleys. Expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency is 50 per cent. above what it was two years ago. I am glad that as a result of all that and of the higher production and the fall in unemployment, Wales is the most successful region in the United Kingdom.

Patient Statistics

7. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients were

treated in National Health Service hospitals in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the figures in 1979.

Mr. Grist: In 1987, 448,716 in-patients were treated and 516,861 new out-patients were seen in NHS hospitals in Wales. Comparable figures for 1979 were 349,695 in-patients and 428,739 out-patients. Those figures represent increases of 28 per cent. and 21 per cent., respectively, since 1979.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures, above all others, show the improvement in the National Health Service since 1979?

Mr. Grist: They certainly do, and they show the strain under which the Health Service is placed by an increase in demand and its success in meeting that demand. It is worth noting that during the period of the last Labour Government, in-patient cases increased by only 6 per cent. as opposed to 28 per cent. under this Government and that the number of new out-patients fell by 3 per cent. as opposed to rising by 20 per cent. under this Government.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Under-Secretry of State look at the out-patient figures because there is a crisis in the dermatology service in south Wales? In my constituency it now takes up to two years to get an appointment to see a consultant dermatologist. Will the hon. Gentleman look at the figures again and provide some more money to ensure that dermatology does not remain the Cinderella service of the Health Service?

Mr. Grist: I am not sure about it being a Cinderella service, but we are certainly aware of the shortages in that area and are addressing them urgently.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that that dramatic increase in the number of patients treated in Wales has been made possible by the massive increase in Government spending in Wales on the NHS, which has increased from £11 per week for every household in Wales in 1978-79 to £36 per week for every household in Wales in 1989-90? Does he also agree that the NHS White Paper proposals, such as the appointment of more consultants and giving GPs their choice of hospitals, will ensure that that trend continues and that more patients are treated more quickly in the future?

Mr. Grist: That is our precise intention—to give patients the choice, to give doctors the ability to offer the choice to their patients, and to provide the spur to the hospital services to make sure that choice is a reality. It is worth noting that under this Government the number of consultants has increased by 22·5 per cent., the number of registrars by more than 11 per cent., and the number of those directly concerned with patient care by more than 17 per cent. That is this Government's record.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: What advice does the Minister offer my constituent who is 83 years old and needs an eye operation? That gentleman has had severely deteriorating eyesight for many years, and now he cannot read a newspaper or watch television. His quality of life is being severely jeopardised. All he needs is an operation to remove scar tissue from the eye and a slight cataract for which he has been told by his consultant he will have to wait seven months. He is 83 years old, and there is a seven-month waiting list for what is really a minor operation. The same consultant told him that, if he had it done privately, he could do the operation for him straight away at a cost of about £1,000.

Mr. Grist: I cannot give individual advice on such a case. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me with details, we will look into the matter. It is worth noting that under our proposals the general practitioner of the hon. Gentleman's constituent would be able to look around for other waiting lists that very often would be a great deal shorter, but about which at present he may be entirely ignorant. The hon. Gentleman describes precisely the sort of situation that we wish to bring to an end.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Are not the very creditable increases in the number of patients being treated the real measure of the Government's commitment to continuing the expansion and improvement of the Health Service? Does my hon. Friend agree that that refutes the spurious claims about bed numbers? Because of the deployment of resources, under-utilised beds can reduce the number of people being treated.

Mr. Grist: Certainly the enormous rise in day cases under this Government, which is a part of modern medicine, has made a tremendous change in the use of beds. As I know myself, people can go in and out of hospital under modern medication at a speed that was almost undreamed of when most of us were young.

Mr. Michael: Rather than repeat statistics that he must know are misleading, will the Minister recognise that the health record of the Government, of which the Secretary of State has been a Member for 10 years, and their future health policies, which have been drawn up by a Cabinet Committee of which the Secretary of State was a member, were wholeheartedly rejected by the voters of the Vale of Glamorgan? Will the Secretary of State, therefore, exclude Wales from the proposals set out in the Health Service White Paper?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends gave misleading statistics. I believe that they will find, when the general election comes, that they have been rumbled. When we have a population with increasing health benefits, with more centenarians, with people living longer, better and more healthily, with more people being innoculated and vaccinated, and with people keeping their teeth longer, it staggers me that any hon. Member could say that the Health Service is failing under this Government.

Single Market

8. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what preparations are being made by his Department for the introduction of the single European market on 1 January 1993.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department is actively engaged in a vigorous campaign to encourage Welsh businesses to prepare for the single European market. It provides information and expert advice on the key issues, and access to a wide variety of practical assistance, including the consultancies available under Enterprise Wales.

Mr. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most important decisions concerning 1992 are now being taken in Wales? What is the latest figure for inward

investment and what effect does my right hon. Friend expect that to have on exporting prospects for Wales in 1993?

Mr. Walker: I agree that action is needed now. I am pleased to say that throughout the Principality a whole range of decisions is being taken by commercial concerns. Inward investment is transforming the Welsh economy as an exporting country. In fact, the five biggest inward investments of the past few years, when completed, will produce about £1 billion of exports per year.

Dr. Thomas: Would the Secretary of State care to explain how the attitude of his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the Lingua programme is helpful to Welsh prisoners as they approach 1992?

Mr. Walker: That is of no basic disadvantage; nor will it affect them.

Regional Development

10. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has for changes to his regional development policy particularly in relation to Swansea and south-west Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am always looking to ensure that the Government's various mechanisms to sustain and stimulate development are effectively deployed. Over the past year unemployment in the Swansea and Llanelli travel-to-work area has fallen by nearly 3,800. I welcome the development of the Swansea bay partnership and the exciting link announced 10 days ago between British Urban Development and Swansea city council.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Secretary of State examine the reasons why there is no significant Japanese investment in the area covered by the Swansea bay partnership and why we cannot attract Toyota? Would not he conclude that it is related to the removal of our regional development status and a failure to give adequate infrastructural investment to the area, by which I mean adequate access to the Channel tunnel and the quick completion of the Baglan-Lonlas motorway?

Mr. Walker: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's question. He gave Toyota as an example, but he will know that because of European Commission regulations on Toyota no country in Europe could give regional aid. Our offer to Toyota—the same one as was made in Derby—was devoid of regional assistance because of that. By Commission agreement, the motor industry is not subject to regional aid. General developments to improve the infrastructure in Swansea are on a considerable scale. I do not believe that the enormous potential investment that was announced 10 days ago would have been announced unless that were the case.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are much more likely to secure jobs and prosperity in Wales by encouraging private sector investment than by trying to recreate the museum of industrial archaeology which would have been maintained had the Labour party been in power these past 10 years? May I say to my right hon. Friend that his trumpet is in every respect far preferable to the Opposition's tin whistle?

Mr. Walker: Enormous diversification is taking place, for example the enormous growth in financial services in Swansea, Cardiff and elsewhere, and the great diversity in new manufacturing. The fall in unemployment in the past two years has been on a scale which will produce a Wales which enjoys full employment in a diversified, free enterprise economy for the first time.

Hon. Members: When?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Does the Secretary of State realise that the decision in 1979 by the Government, of whom he was a member, to remove special development area status from south-west Wales has had a damaging effect? We needed that status and assistance to compensate us for being further from the markets. If he is genuinely interested in regional development will he try to get it restored?

Mr. Walker: The right hon. Gentleman, who has understandably raised his considerable anxiety at the closure of the Austin-Rover plant, will be pleased with the developments that have taken place since as a result of our flexible methods of assistance through the Welsh Development Agency. The saving of a considerable number of jobs and a whole range of other investments are taking place in his constituency.

Aluminium (Water Supplies)

11. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a detailed record of the aluminium levels in domestic water supplied in mid and south Glamorgan by the Welsh water authority in 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the Welsh water authority and the information is not held by my Department.

Dr. Howells: Is the Minister aware that a great many of my constituents are extremely worried about the high levels of aluminium being recorded in domestic water supplies from Welsh Water? Will he agree that the people of Wales pay a high enough price for water without having to worry about ill health? If he agrees, will he have a word with his noble Friend Lord Crickhowell about putting matters right?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman and his constituents can at least be comforted by the fact that the Welsh water authority's programmes have improvements in hand which will remove the aluminium by 1992 at the latest. Although it has been concluded that there is a link between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium—I think that that is the hon. Gentleman's point—it has not yet been proven and further studies are being undertaken. There is no absolute proof.

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister explain why it is that when improvements are sought in the quality of water supply, the Welsh water authority says that money is limited for capital expenditure, yet when politics and its relationship with the Government demand, it is able to find £2 million, this year alone, for advertising its corporate existence? There never seems to be a shortage of money then.

Mr. Grist: It is worth pointing out that the Welsh water authority has 35 remedial work schemes, which are estimated to cost £96·7 million, which makes the figures that the hon. Gentleman mentioned look small beer.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Welsh water industry will be able to increase its capital expenditure once it is able to tap the private market for funds?

Mr. Grist: Absolutely, and with a flexibility and capacity to think in the long term which a state enterprise does not have because it has to answer to the Exchequer's needs in running the total economy.

Rural Schools

12. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to maintain small schools in rural areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to determine how to preserve and enhance the quality of education in rural areas. The Government have given help through education support grant to improve the quality and range of the curriculum provided in rural schools. The measures included in the Education Reform Act 1988 are intended to improve the quality of education in all schools, including small rural ones and my right hon. Friend will be monitoring the effects of its implementation.

Mr. Jones: In view of his reply will the Minister ensure that the Fron school in my constituency remains open? If it does not, many very young children will be travelling up and down the A5, which, as he knows, is a dangerous and busy road. I know that this matter is the responsibility of Clwyd county council, but it needs the funds.

Mr. Roberts: I am aware of the case of Froncysyllte school, which has 16 pupils and five primary pupils. The hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that it is a matter for Clwyd local education authority. No proposal is as yet before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Sir Anthony Meyer: We all agree on the importance of small rural schools, particularly for social reasons. Does my hon. Friend share my satisfaction that Clwyd county council will now have to choose between having its cake and eating it?

Mr. Roberts: I am not exactly sure of the implications of the fact that, as I understand it, the Labour party now has a majority of one on Clwyd county council. However, that position carries with it an obligation for Labour members to chair all the committees, which, hitherto, the Labour party has avoided doing.

Health Authority Chairmen

13. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairmen of health authorities in Wales; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I met the Welsh health authorities' chairmen's committee on 30 November 1988. The main subjects discussed were the NHS review; resource allocations for 1989-90; manpower issues; and obstacles to efficient management. We are to meet it again on 15 May for a full discussion of the NHS review White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Michael: Does not the Minister consider the topic of 10-year hospital plans of sufficient importance to warrant a special meeting with individual chairmen? Now that he has had more than seven months to consider the South Glamorgan health authority's plan and the Vale of Glamorgan by-election is out of the way, will he reject the plan as it stands, and also the ill-judged closures in it?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman was one of two Members of Parliament who made representations about the South Glamorgan plan and we know where he stands. As he says, the plan is before the Department and I cannot comment on it, but we have taken careful note of the representations that he made.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister give the House the figures for hospital waiting lists in 1979 and the latest available figures? Will he give an estimate of how much the figures have been massaged in the Government's favour by the removal of day cases and self-deferred cases during this Government's period in office? Will he remember the promise that he made two years ago that one year ago no person waiting for in-patient treatment in Wales would have to wait more than a month? The waiting list is appalling and has, if anything, become worse. When will he tell the health authority chairmen that the Government are going to carry out that promise?

Mr. Grist: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself, he will have to wait one more week until the latest statistics are published. However, the general point should be made that the more successful a service is, the bigger its waiting list seems to become, because more people are referred. It is clear that when a new service becomes available more and more people pile in on it and are referred to it by their general practitioners. Twenty years ago there was no waiting list for hip operations; now, an unprecedented number of people are having them.

Dock Workers

15. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered dock workers there are in the ports of south Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are 587 dock workers registered in the five south Wales ports covered by the scheme.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that however few registered dock workers are left in the ports of south Wales, there will be even fewer if there is a dock strike in the next few weeks? Does he agree that, as a Bristol Member, I am the perfect disinterested party to ask this question, since if there is trouble in the south Wales ports it will inevitably redound to the benefit of Bristol?

Mr. Roberts: I agree that there is really no reason for a strike, and if there is one, it can result only in a further loss of jobs. It would help us all—dockers and the House—if the Opposition declared their attitude to a strike unequivocally. Are they for a strike or against it?

The ports in the scheme in Wales have suffered a reduction in the number of jobs over the years and a decline in trade, whereas the non-scheme port of Neath has experienced an increase of about 60 per cent. in the tonnage that passes through it.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Procedures (Reform)

25. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the White Paper on the reform of civil procedure and progress made to date by the working party on multi-party actions and legal aid and their effects upon work-related personal injury claims.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The civil justice review, to which the Government gave their response on 6 April 1989, proposes a radical reallocation of business between the High Court and the county court. In addition, the Legal Aid Board has been conducting a detailed study of the opportunity for, and funding of, multi-party actions. It is expected to publish its preliminary conclusions and to go out to general consultation in the very near future.

Mr. Allen: Neither the White Paper nor the working group seems to address the difficult problem of personal injury claims. It is difficult to pursue such claims even when, as often happens, they are legitimate. Will the Minister consider extending the strict liability rule and examine the burden of proof so that legitimate claims can be pursued more effectively?

The Solicitor-General: On the contrary, the civil justice review devotes a great deal of its attention to personal injury claims and brings forward some far-reaching proposals for speeding up justice in this area and for making it less expensive.

Crown Prosecution Service

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about the work of the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): About 3·3 million cases have been handled by the service since it began. The commitment and professionalism of the staff throughout this early period have impressed me greatly. Understaffing of lawyers in some areas has, from the outset, been a serious handicap. It has imposed heavy burdens on those in post, but staffing levels are now improving following last year's improvements in pay. Independent acknowledgement of growing strength in the performance of the new service has recently come from the chairman of the Magistrates Association, the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Metropolitan police. This I believe to be well deserved, and it is most welcome.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that the salary structure is now adequate to attract candidates of the right calibre?

The Attorney-General: There has certainly been an improvement in recruiting following the increases in pay to which I have just referred. I have, of course, always to remember the need for a satisfactory career structure, and the fact that there is an overall shortage of lawyers nationwide.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General agree that in the recent case concerning the Wapping police officers and those who have now been discharged by the Bow street magistrates, the papers were delivered by the police complaints bureau in May and a decision on prosecution was not taken until December? Could that in part have been due to the fact that the inner London staffing of the Crown prosecution service is still lamentably low?

The Attorney-General: All that it would be right for me to say about a detailed case, following a reply to an open question about the Crown prosecution service, is that in the instance to which the hon. Gentleman refers, matters are more complex than may have been conveyed by press reports.

Mr. Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend agree that the Bar Council's response to the Green Paper, particularly as it refers to the Crown prosecution service, has been most constructive? Will he confirm that the cost to the Crown prosecution service of instructing solicitors is exactly double the cost to the service of instructing people from the independent Bar?

The Attorney-General: It is certainly true that solicitors' overheads, being higher than those of barristers, have led to a substantial increase in the amount that is paid to solicitors who act as agents for the Crown prosecution service. I am glad to endorse what my hon. and learned Friend says about the quality of the Bar's response to the Green Paper.

Mr. Nellist: Given the increasing number of homeless young people prosecuted in London under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and the fact that the Crown prosecution service appears to prosecute without question, may I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to explain what purpose is being served? Why are the Crown prosecution service and the police apparently conducting special nightly sweeps of young people and putting them in court the next morning? In view of what has been said about the understaffing of the Crown prosecution service, is not this a wasteful and vindictive use of public resources?

The Attorney-General: No case is prosecuted by the Crown prosecution service without question, to adopt the hon. Gentleman's phraseology. Nor is any sweep carried out by the service in London or anywhere else. The Crown prosecution service is bound by the guidelines established for the conduct of prosecutions, which have statutory authority. I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's interest in this subject and I read the report today in *The Guardian*.

Mr. Favell: While the Crown prosecution service has had teething problems, is not the service now dealing well with the new time limits for remand cases in the experimental areas set by the Home Secretary, and has not that released a large number of policemen back on to the beat?

The Attorney-General: That is absolutely true. When the matter was brought forward by the Royal Commission, about 600 police officers were estimated to have been released from court work. I have no evidence to suggest that that is not the case and that the police are not back where the public want to see them—on the beat. As for timings, it is an important change that cases must now reach the court within a certain time after committal, and that is being well met by the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General take the House into his confidence about the state of morale of the CPS? Is not the pay of those in the Government legal service in a complete mess and are not the comparabilities providing difficulties between one part of the service and another? How many have joined the CPS this year, having resigned as magistrates' clerks, leading to substantial difficulties, including the cancellation of some courts?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will not expect me to give detailed answers to all those questions, but I will look into the matters he raises and write to him about them. Those who serve the Crown prosecution service—after a wide programme of visits since the service began—are deeply committed to its work. Of course they would like to see recruiting up to full establishment, and there has never been any doubt that there is a shortfall; I have mentioned that today. I believe that pay is competitive now, but it must be kept carefully under review.

Advice (Confidentiality)

27. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps he takes to preserve the confidentiality of his advice to Ministers and others.

The Attorney-General: The rule is so well known and observed that I find no such steps are necessary.

Mr. Winnick: I notice that the Attorney-General smiles. Given the remarks of Sir Leon Brittan, is it not now clear that there would have been no leak of the letter which the right hon. and learned Gentleman wrote as Solicitor-General had not "express approval"—I am using the recent words of Sir Leon Brittan—been given by the Prime Minister's chief press secretary and political secretary? In view of the Attorney-General's reply to my main question, did not he feel very much let down by the way in which the No. 10 Downing street staff behaved? How can he be reassured tht such behaviour will not occur again?

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. and learned Gentleman was sandbagged.

The Attorney-General: It would need rather a large sandbag.

Mr. Banks: Handbagged, then.

The Attorney-General: It would need an even larger handbag.

This is well ploughed ground and I have no intention of adding to its now very distant yield.

Gloucester United Schools Charity

28. **Mr. French:** To ask the Attorney-General if he is yet in a position to make a statement on his investigation of the affairs of the Gloucester United Schools charity.

The Solicitor-General: The investigation of the affairs of the Gloucester United Schools charity, which has been conducted with the assistance of counsel for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and for Gloucester county council, is well advanced. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position to reach a conclusion in the fairly near future.

Mr. French: I note my hon. and learned Friend's statement, but will he accept that it is now more than six months since the Treasury Solicitor first instituted his part of the inquiry and more than 15 years since the county council first failed to account correctly for its stewardship of the assets of the charity? Does he not feel that the beneficiaries have been patient for long enough?

The Solicitor-General: A careful examination of a period of 15 years is well advanced after six months. That is not bad going. I hope to be able to assist my hon. Friend more fully in the fairly near future.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crown Agents

30. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he now expects the Crown Agents to be privatised.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): As I informed the House on 14 December 1988, Her Majesty's Government have no immediate plans to privatise the Crown Agents.

Mr. Field: Given the great success that the Crown Agents have in arranging training for overseas personnel in various skills such as public administration and legal work, and the fact that the Government have returned an enormous number of training functions to the private sector, is it not time that the Crown Agents were privatised so that the training of overseas students can be performed by the private sector and the functions even expanded?

Mr. Patten: As I made clear last December, our legislative ambitions have to be reconciled with pressures on the legislative timetable. We have now completed the restructuring of the Crown Agents, to which I referred last December, and I have every confidence in their ability to discharge their functions effectively. I am delighted that they have won an extremely important contract from the Japanese aid programme to help with the procurement of Japanese aid in Africa.

Mr. Gow: Knowing my hon. Friend's zeal for the privatisation programme, what injury would be done to those who are now receiving service from the Crown Agents if the Crown Agents were to be privatised?

Mr. Patten: I am ready to concede straight away that my hon. Friend is an expert on my zeal. He is right to refer to my zeal in relation to the Government's privatisation programme. I can assure him that no damage would be done to the excellent work that is done by the Crown Agents were they to be privatised. However, privatisation needs legislation and legislation needs time.

Rural Health Care, India

31. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he is making to the development of rural health care in India.

Mr. Chris Patten: I recently approved an allocation of £20 million for phase II of the family welfare project in the state of Orissa. This project is directed towards the health care of mothers and children with special emphasis on poor tribal groups in rural areas. It complements our

village health care programme in Gujarat and long-standing support for national programmes on leprosy, malaria, blindness, cancer and nutrition.

Miss Widdecombe: I congratulate my hon. Friend on that reply, but will he assure the House that wherever possible health care programmes and direct attacks on poverty are integrated properly with education? Without education the other two factors are superfluous.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. We try to integrate our health programme in India and elsewhere with other programmes. We are trying to do that with our major education programme in Andrha Pradesh, for example, and to integrate also health care with our slum improvement programmes in Hyderabad, Visak, and elsewhere.

Ethiopia (Somalian Refugees)

32. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid given by Her Majesty's Government to Somalian refugees in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the outbreak of the civil conflict in Somalia last year, we have provided assistance totalling some £2·45 million for Somali refugees in Ethiopia. We provided a further £2·73 million in support of programmes run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the benefit both of Sudanese and Somali refugees in Ethiopia.

Ms. Mowlam: I am sure that the Minister is well aware of the level of malnutrition that exists in many refugee camps in Ethiopia. In Hartisheik refugee camp, for example, more than 30 per cent. of children aged under five are defined as malnourished. Will he outline his plans to provide water and food to the camps before malnutrition and disease break out, rather than after?

Mr. Patten: I hope that the hon. Lady will not misunderstand me when I say that I do not think that the immediate problem is lack of resources in the camps in the Ogaden. When I visited those camps a few months ago, they had a considerable number of organisational problems that I took up with Mr. Hocké, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, when I returned to London. Considerable problems still exist there. Many have been brought to our attention by non-governmental organisations to whom I spoke a couple of weeks ago, and I shall be bringing them to Mr. Hocké's attention when he visits London later this month.

Mr. Baldry: Given that there are Somalian refugees in Ethiopia, Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan, and Sudanese refugees elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, is not the root cause of so many difficulties the eternal strife and civil disturbances within those countries? When will the international community as a whole get a grip on the Horn of Africa and start helping those countries resolve some of their internal difficulties? Otherwise, there will be an endless saga of malnutrition and starvation.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right in saying that the major cause of distress in the Horn of Africa is civil conflict in the countries he mentioned. I fear that our ability to provide humanitarian relief to those in need is greater than our ability to make that humanitarian relief unnecessary in the first place. However, my hon. Friend makes an important point. We make a good deal of effort ourselves—bilaterally, through the Community, and through other channels—to bring about peace in that region.

Nicaragua

33. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of aid given to Nicaragua by Her Majesty's Government in 1988, expressed as a per capita sum of the population of Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: The level of aid given to Nicaragua by Her Majesty's Government in 1988 through the European Community, disaster relief and other channels was around £1·05 per capita.

Mr. Clarke: The Minister did not mention bilateral aid. Will he bear in mind that the warmth of the welcome given by the people of Great Britain to President Daniel Ortega at the weekend suggests that we should support positive policies that will assist a country which has been savaged by a war not of its own making, which has lost 60,000 people, and where there is clearly a need for investment in education, health care, and the rest? Will the Minister take this great opportunity to open a new chapter in the relations between this country and Nicaragua?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman's account of public joy is somewhat selective. It remains our policy to concentrate bilateral aid programmes on the poorest countries and on Commonwealth countries as much as possible. There are 60 countries in the world poorer than Nicaragua.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend agree that Nicaragua's thoroughly reprehensible regime is far less deserving of aid than the excellent programme that he is running in Gujarat? Does he agree also that it would be better to concentrate aid in that particular area?

Mr. Patten: I am conscious that countries such as Malawi, Bangladesh and Nepal have per capita GNPs about one fifth of Nicaragua's. As for what my hon. Friend said about the political situation in Nicaragua, I think that the whole House should be looking for action, not just words.

Miss Lestor: No doubt the president has informed the Prime Minister of some of Nicaragua's problems, particularly those arising from the war and other difficulties. Can the Minister give an assurance that when he considers the needs of Nicaragua and its progress—especially on human rights, and education—he will ensure that no aid to Nicaragua or any other country, however poor it may be, will have any connection with the supply of arms by us?

Mr. Patten: There is certainly no connection between defence sales and civil aid. That is made clear in the statute setting up my Department and in my programme, and it remains true, whatever recycled *Guardian* stories may say to the contrary.

No doubt the president of Nicaragua made a number of interesting observations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this morning, and I should be surprised if my

right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not make a number of interesting observations to the president of Nicaragua.

Nigeria

35. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department is providing for Nigeria's economic reform programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are making available to the Government of Nigeria a grant of $100 million for 1989 in support of its economic adjustment programme, which has the backing of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Watts: Now that Nigeria is making welcome moves towards economic recovery and stability, would it not be appropriate for the Commonwealth Development Corporation to consider investment in Nigeria in support of the growth of the private sector?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is certainly right to refer to the progress made in Nigeria, and I know that the Government will be looking forward to discussing that progress with President Babangida, who is to visit London this week. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to refer to the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which is indeed exploring the possibility of working in Nigeria and has already visited that country for some initial discussions.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Magistrates' Courts (Remands in Custody) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Social Security Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Social Security Benefit (Dependency) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 (S.R.(N.I.), 1989, No. 103) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Social Security (Contribution) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989 (S.R.(N.I.), 1989, No. 104) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

Dock Work Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.31 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1. The proceedings on the Bill in the Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall be brought to a conclusion at or before 1 p.m. on 18th May 1989, and the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House, on or before that day.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in one allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at midnight on that day; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of that day as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the third day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusions of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On an allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a member of the Government;

(d) and other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If the allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the

[Mr. John Wakeham]

House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Reccommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, reccommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Dock Work Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

The House will be familiar with the simple aim of the Dock Work Bill—to bring the national dock labour scheme to an end quickly, but in an orderly fashion and with continued special provision for dock workers' severance. There are many arguments in favour of abolishing the scheme—including the desirability of ending restrictive practices and reducing the burden that they impose on the taxpayer—but the most potent, in my view, is that the scheme will ensure a better future for the ports industry in this country, and a better future for those working within the industry.

I recognise, of course, that the Labour party does not agree with that view, and that even if I possessed the persuasive powers of Socrates I should probably still not succeed in diverting its members from their chosen path. The merits of the measure, however, are not the central issue in this debate. We are concerned this afternoon with whether or not to establish a timetable for the consideration of the Bill in Committee and when it returns to the Floor of the House.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Leader of the House answer a question to which I have been trying to find an answer ever since the White Paper was published? All parliamentary questions and all correspondence with the Secretary of State for Employment made it clear that the Government had no plans to abolish the national dock labour scheme in this Parliament. Why have they suddenly changed their mind?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that that statement is correct. I remember answering many questions from this Dispatch Box, and I have no doubt that I consulted my right hon. Friend before we said that we had no plans "at present" to abolish the scheme. We then made a statement and proceeded from that date. I do not think that we completely ruled out such action at any time. The Bill was brought in in a perfectly proper fashion.

The arguments for a sensible timetable are compelling. The Labour party is on record as being committed to resisting the Bill by all means at its disposal. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said so on Second Reading, and his hon. Friends have said as much in Committee. We do not have to look far to see what those means will be. What action they are or are not taking outside Parliament is not a matter for this motion, but inside Parliament the Official Opposition's hand was revealed during the first sitting of the Committee, when the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said:

"It may sound naughty and public opinion may be a little shocked, but all we can do is delay the legislation."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 25 April 1989; c. 24.]

The hon. Gentleman has certainly commenced his attempt to do so. During one of his two-hour speeches, I noticed that he was brought to order no fewer than 10 times by the Chairman as he sought to widen the debate to include the reasons why he had not turned up to a previous sitting, the education of members of the Committee, his inability to spell the word "chasuble", television crews' visits to Rotterdam, dock workers' dinners, and component assembly work. He spoke about almost everything except the amendments in question.

It is as well for the hon. Member that he obeyed, for a few seconds at least, the Chairman's injunction to

"return to the amendments . . .— or else."

His hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) did not do quite so well. He was brought to order by the Chair for tedious repetition a mere nine times in one of his speeches. The philosophy behind these tactics was expressed in typically disarming fashion by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. He said,

"We are saying, 'Hang on a minute, mate. Don't rush it.'"

and

"We shall be in power shortly."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 May 1989; c. 137-150.]

My colleagues and I on this side of the House are unwilling to wait so long to make progress with the Bill. I think that the best way forward to enable the Bill to be discussed in a sensible and balanced manner is thus to pass a timetable motion at this stage of the Committee proceedings. The Committee has now sat for 29 hours. My motion today would allow it to sit for at least another 30. For what the Opposition have repeatedly referred to as a one-clause Bill, that is a very generous amount of time. In addition, there will be a full day until midnight for the remaining stages.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is there any precedent for the imposition of the guillotine after 29 hours, except for the consideration of Bills by a Committee of the whole House?

Mr. Wakeham: There were certainly guillotines immediately after Second Readings of the Scotland Bill and the Wales Bill. They were introduced by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman can argue his case later. The right

hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has said on a number of occasions in this House that there is always a first time for everything.

Mr. Meacher: And that is now.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a one-clause Bill. The timetable motion will allow plenty of time to debate it.

In the debate last week on the timetable motion for the Self-Governing Schools etc., (Scotland) Bill, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) accused me of celebrating the 200th anniversary of the French revolution by dressing up as Madame Defarge and guillotining everything in sight. However, he has an inaccurate sense of historical analogy. I am surprised that the hon. Member did not know that the relevant anniversary is the 150th birthday of Bradshaw's railway timetable, first published in 1839. It is this difference between the guillotine and the timetable which the Opposition do not or pretend not to understand.

The guillotine, as operated by their right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent during his version of the Terror, was designed to cut short debate in its prime. My timetable motions, introduced for the most part at an earlier stage, aim to ensure satisfactory scrutiny of the whole Bill. In deciding whether to move such motions, I have in mind the views of the Procedure Committee report in the last Parliament: that the introduction of a timetable motion too late in the Committee stage can lead to inadequate consideration of a Bill's later clauses. In the debate on procedure last November, I said that, while I preferred to proceed on the basis of agreement wherever possible, and this in the majority of cases, I shared the desire of the Committee to move towards timetable motions, where they are necessary, at a time which allows for properly apportioned consideration.

In the timetable motion debate the other night, I was glad to receive support for this concept from the Social and Liberal Democratic party, in a thoughtful speech by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). My approach, therefore, is based on a considered timetable for, rather than guillotining of, debate: George Bradshaw rather than Madame Defarge.

The Dock Work Bill is undoubtedly controversial, and I regret that this controversy makes it difficult to reach informal agreement with the Opposition on the Bill's progress. Judging by the reports of the Committee stage that I have read, the Opposition have not exactly been short of time in which to make their points, and, indeed, have been spinning things out for as long as possible.

I hope that the motion that I am moving this afternoon will, by establishing a definite though distant time for debate to finish, concentrate minds and ensure proper scrutiny of this worthwhile and beneficial measure. I commend the motion to the House.

3.40 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I do not want to get into lengthy disputes with the Leader of the House about historical analogies, but it might be worth putting on record the fact that we shall not be able to celebrate the anniversary of the guillotine for another three years, because I believe that it came into operation in 1792. If everyone were given their credit, the guillotine would not be so called because, using an anachronistic method of putting things out to tender, after M. Guillotine had proposed the idea, the revolutionary French put it out to tender and the guillotine was built by a German called Schmidt. Perhaps we should be discussing a Schmidt motion today, but I shall not do that, because it will confuse those who do not understand.

This is the 11th guillotine motion that has been moved by the Leader of the House since he was replaced as Government Chief Whip and given the job of upholding the rights and privileges of the House. Each time that he speaks on guillotine motions he gives different justifications, which boil down to a restatement of Wakeham's law —"When debate becomes embarrassing to the Government, I use our majority of 100 to stifle it." That is what he intends to do with this Bill.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: Certainly not at the moment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Give way.

Mr. Dobson: I said that I will not give way at the moment. I will do so in a minute or two.

The rush to curtail debate on the Dock Work Bill is all of a piece with its sudden and unheralded appearance on the parliamentary agenda. In January this year, the Prime Minister confirmed that she did not propose to abolish the dock labour scheme. The Under-Secretary of State for Employment said that the Government had

"no plans to change or abolish it."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 276.]

On 20 March, when pressed to abolish the scheme by the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), the Secretary of State referred him to the Prime Minister's answer in January.

Out of the blue, on 6 April the Secretary of State announced that the dock labour scheme was to be abolished. In an attempt to justify this peculiar timing, he talked of

"an emerging consensus . . . that the scheme should go."—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 345.]

It was a strange emerging consensus, because unless the Secretary of State was lying on 20 March—I am sure that he was not—until that date the consensus appeared to exclude him and the Prime Minister. Few things in nature have a life cycle as short as this rather peculiar emerging consensus. The only example of which I can think is the emergence of a blowfly from a decaying carcase, which takes from two to three weeks depending on how warm things are getting, which is significant in itself.

Everyone knows that the Bill was introduced in the hope that it would provoke a strike, which the Government believed would make the Labour party unpopular and, at the same time, make it possible for the Government to blame someone else for the worsening trade figures. That is why it was rushed forward. If the Secretary of State wishes to dispute what I am saying, I challenge him to make public every document and record of discussions between Ministers, civil servants, port employers and shippers over the past six months. If he fails to do so, it will be because he knows that the publication of that evidence will incriminate him.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Perhaps my hon. Friend should also ask that the menus of the lunches between the port employers and Conservative Members be

[Mr. Tony Banks]

placed on record. They were large and expensive lunches. On this occasion, the port employers must have felt that they had invested their money most wisely.

Mr. Dobson: It seems quite possible that they made what they considered to be a wise investment, although there are other investments that would be wiser.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's arguments about a dock strike, which were also put forward by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) in Committee. Can he explain to the House why he believes that a national dock strike, which would lead to imports being held up until the end of the strike and then flooding in, but which would, at the same time, damage our long-term export potential, would help the balance of payments? How can he believe that to be good economics? Perhaps this is the economics of the Socialist madhouse, but it is not the economics of the real world.

Mr. Dobson: Nothing the dockers do could do as much harm to Britain's balance of trade and balance of payments as the combined efforts of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister. However, any interruption through industrial action would mean that the Government would be able to cast further doubts—I say "further doubts" deliberately—on the accuracy of the trade figures, which the Government are already calling into question now that they have become an embarrassment.

The announcement was geared to the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. Barry, the biggest town in the constituency, is a scheme port and from the word go, the Tories made every effort to turn the dock labour scheme into an issue on the door-step. The Tory candidate tried repeatedly to breathe life into this artificial issue. If any Conservative Members doubt that, they should read the *Western Mail* for 8 April, which said that the issue had enabled the Tory candidate to bring an end to the phoney way and start the campaign. At early Labour press conferences, each newly arrived Tory newspaper reporter could be relied on to raise the issue. But look what happened: the people of the Vale saw through the Tory contrivance, and the swing to Labour was the biggest since even before the dock labour scheme was introduced, which was a long time ago.

The reasons the Government give for abolishing the scheme do not bear close scrutiny, which is why they want to curtail the debate. They assert that some scheme ports have lost passengers and cargo. Some have, but that has little or nothing to do with the dock labour scheme. Most of the difference results from technological changes, shifting patterns of trade and the introduction of bulk carriers and containerisation. There are other reasons apart from technological changes in the docks. Most of the passengers who once sailed in and out of Liverpool and Southampton now fly in and out of Heathrow and Gatwick. Some goods that used to go by sea are now air freighted. Who would have believed, 25 years ago, that the economics of flying would eventually have permitted the air freighting of such a common cargo as potatoes?

There has also been a shift in the direction of our trade towards Europe, so that ports in the south-east have tended to do well—whether new, non-scheme ports such as Felixstowe, old, non-scheme ports such as Dover or previously small, old scheme ports such as Ipswich. The increase in traffic since 1982 in the non-scheme ports has been matched by that in the scheme ports. Major investment is planned or under way in such scheme ports as Immingham, Southampton, Bristol, King's Lynn, Goole, Hull, Ayr, Swansea, Newport and Tilbury. Most of the investment required has been made by opponents of the dock labour scheme who, unlike the Government, have not been taken in by their own propaganda. Their actions have cast doubt on their assertions that the scheme ports cannot compete with non-scheme ports.

The Government's arguments in the House have themselves been contradictory. The Secretary of State for Employment talked about the scheme providing "jobs for life". In the same speech he said:

"Jobs have gone . . . and long lines of workers have volunteered to leave the industry altogether."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 43-44.]

Both those statements cannot be right, and most people realise that the second assertion is much nearer the truth than the first.

What of the remaining scheme dockers—those whose main fear is a loss of reasonable job security and a return to casual working instead of regular guaranteed work? By its very nature, demand for dock work can fluctuate from day to day. The Government want the dock workers to bear the brunt of that fluctuation, and some of the Government's supporters think that dock workers should get paid only when they are loading or unloading ships. Why should dock workers be different from anyone else? Soldiers are not paid only when there is a war, or MPs only when they are voting. Parliamentary correspondents do not get paid only when they are sitting in the Press Gallery; if they did, many of them would have their money stopped at this moment. Industrial correspondents are paid even when there are no disputes and when their newspaper contains no stories of disputes.

Both the Government and the employers say that they do not intend to reintroduce casual working in the scheme ports. If the employers mean what they say, they should negotiate with the Transport and General Workers Union to reach a binding agreement not to introduce casual working. If the Government mean what they say, they should pass a law to guarantee just that. To provide statutory backing for regular working would make no difference if the port employers are telling the truth; such legislation would come into operation only if it turned out that the employers had been lying. The Secretary of State should show some confidence in the good faith of his friends, the port employers.

The port employers are, indeed, the good friends of the Tory party and, to be fair, the Tories have been good friends to the port employers. That is only in accordance with the Tory maxim that a friend who gives £100,000 to party funds is a friend indeed.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how friendly the Labour party is with the Transport and General Workers Union—the union that supports the dockers? How much has the TGWU given the Labour party to oppose the measure?

Mr. Dobson: As everybody knows, the TGWU gives substantial sums to sustain the Labour party. It is worth remembering that the union is there to represent the dockers, not to tell them what to do. We should remember

the basic democratic arrangements in the trade unions—different from the rather undemocratic arrangements surrounding some of the port employers. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, which is part of P and O—the owners of the Herald of Free Enterprise, who have still to be prosecuted—in effect bought planning permission from the Tory party for further development at Felixstowe. To get the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill through the House, the Prime Minister stayed up half the night and the Government sacrificed a whole day of Government business.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): They had a champagne party.

Mr. Dobson: As my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) says, they had a champagne party to help sustain the weaker brethren through the long watches of the night. Similar Tory help has been given to Associated British Ports, to help it to promote some if its Bills. At the time, some of my colleagues asked whether there was no end to this dubious Government's dubious help for the port employers. The answer appears to be no. The Bill is unique; it quite reverses the usual role of an Employment Minister. Previous holders of the post have seen it as their job to promote good industrial relations and to keep disputes to a minimum, and have introduced measures which they believed, rightly or wrongly, would achieve that.

The Dock Work Bill is different. It is intended to do quite the reverse—to provoke an industrial dispute. If not, why was there no consultation? Take the proposed reform of the legal profession. In response to threatened industrial action, the judges got their consultation period extended. That happened after a long debate in the House of Lords, where they really do have jobs for life. In his discussions about the future of the National Health Service, the Secretary of State for Health has occasionally behaved as though he thought he was dealing with dockers rather than doctors but it seems that his recent personal and party experiences in Vale of Glamorgan have weakened his resolve.

Now it is only the scheme workers who are being treated like the loyal workers at GCHQ and told without warning that their rights are being taken away. This Bill has been introduced not in the interests of the country or even in the interests of the ports industry—it has certainly not been introduced in the interests of the port workers—but in what the Government wrongly believe will be the short-term interest of the Tory party. It is seen by it as a piece of news management, not something which affects the lives of dock workers and their families.

The timing of this guillotine was intended as another piece of news management, but it has gone wrong. Today was originally to have been devoted to a debate on the Finance Bill. That was changed. This guillotine debate was planned so that it would coincide with the tube strike which the Government believed would occur today, so, at one and the same time, industrial strife would have been the topic both in and out of Parliament. Alas for the Government, in Burns' immortal words

> "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gang aft a-gley."

No doubt with unintended irony, London Regional Transport has upset the Government's timing of the debate by using the Government's own industrial relation laws to stop a tube strike starting today. Things are getting bad. Even Bernard Ingham appears to be losing his grip.

If Ministers and the Leader of the House challenge what I say, will the Leader of the House explain why this guillotine motion was suddenly brought forward and why it became more important than the Finance Bill, and the debate later this week on the future of the National Health Service? From experience, we have come to know that everything that now takes place in this House is geared to news management to maximise what the Government believe will be political benefits for the Tory party.

The Government should abandon this guillotine and withdraw the Bill. If they are really interested in the future of the ports industry, they should bring employers and employees together to work out a future for the docks industry that enables it to modernise and expand and, at the same time, meet the legitimate wishes of dock workers for secure and regular work. All hon. Members have relatively secure and regular work. We should not wish to reduce the working conditions of others who are worse off than ourselves, as a bit of party political spite and news management. That is why Opposition Members oppose the guillotine today.

3.57 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) criticised the Government because, in his view, they changed their mind about the abolition of the dock labour scheme. At the very moment at which the hon. Gentleman addressed the House, a meeting of his party's national executive was taking place. It is a matter of deep regret to you, Mr. Speaker, as it is to me that neither the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) nor the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) is a member of the national executive. Their stabilising influence would have been much in demand.

The remarks that characterised the hon. Gentleman's speech—those about changing policy—could not have been made at a more opportune time. We are told that the Labour party's most important sovereign body—its national executive, no less—is examining every aspect of Labour party policy. Judging from some of the criticisms that have come from Left-wing members of the Labour party, it is certainly possible——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has just started his speech, but I hope that he will relate his remarks to the timetable motion.

Mr. Gow: I was saying that an accusation that was levelled at my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment was that the Government had changed their policy. That accusation can properly be levelled at my right hon. Friend—it is a fair allegation—but there is no sin in changing policy.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. There has never been any doubt in the Government's mind or in their proposals that at some stage—they have said this in writing—they intended to tackle the national dock labour scheme. The deception in the change of policy is that they said that it would not be tackled this Parliament, but suddenly, with no more than 24 hours' notice, a White Paper and a Bill were produced.

Mr. Gow: I reject the charge of deception that has been levelled at the Treasury Bench. Although I agree that there

[Mr. Gow]

has been a change of policy, it lies ill on the lips of the shadow Leader of the House to rebuke us for changing our policy when today and tomorrow of all days the Labour party is engaged on what purports to be a change in its policy.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that we are different? My right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party said two years ago that it was his intention to review his policy, but the Government were saying that they had no plans to abolish the dock labour scheme precisely when they were feverishly working on the White Paper. The Labour party has been completely honest and open, whereas the Government have been completely dishonest.

Mr. Gow: There is certainly room for two views on the openness of the Labour party when conducting its policy review. We are told that the great documents that are under consideration today will not be published until next week. I do not want to stray too much into the policy of the Labour party——

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Gow: No, I shall not give way, because I should like to make a bit of progress.

There is another aspect to the charge that has been levelled at my right hon. Friend with which I wish to deal. Almost 30 years ago, I made a journey to Blackpool. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent was also there. We both attended the Labour party conference that followed the then unprecedented third successive defeat of the right hon. Gentleman's party. He will remember as vividly as I do the speech made by Aneurin Bevan, who said, "You know, comrades, to change policies is not a confession of sin; otherwise the whole of history would be a series of confessions." I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will remember those words.

I advise my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench that I welcome most warmly the change of policy or change of timing that led to the introduction of the Dock Work Bill. I do not wish to rebuke my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment for having decided to introduce that measure at this time. If I have any criticism of my right hon. Friends, it is that they did not introduce the Bill earlier. The Government having made the courageous and correct decision to introduce the Bill, and my having studied what happened in Committee, having read the speeches of some Opposition Members and having been reminded of the 29 hours that have passed, it is perfectly clear that my right hon. Friend's timetable motion would have been justified, even had he introduced it earlier. Therefore, my right hon. Friend, who has expounded the principles upon which the introduction of a timetable motion should rest, is entirely justified in what he has done.

I go further. I believe that there is a case for such actions when it becomes clear—as it frequently does, even before we embark on the Committee stage of a Bill—that there will be deep controversy and deep hostility. Had I been in the shoes of the hon. Member of Holborn and St. Pancras—it is difficult to put myself into the mind of a Socialist, but I shall try—had I been a member of the Opposition and had I been strongly opposed to the Bill, of course I should have deployed precisely the tactics that have been employed by the Labour party in Committee. Nobody is rebuking Opposition Members for doing that. All we are saying is that the Government have a responsibility to secure the passage of their legislation. While ensuring a reasonable opportunity for debate and in relation to the length of the Bill, this timetable motion is most generous.

Therefore, that which we are being asked to do this afternoon is entirely reasonable. I hope that the Bill, which has been too long delayed, will reach the statute book in the minimum time.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that it is not necessarily the number of clauses in the Bill that matters, but the effect that one clause will have on the entire industry? Therefore, his argument that it requires only a brief period of discussion does not face up to the reality that those eight clauses will overturn completely the practices in one of this country's key industries.

Mr. Gow: I do not under-estimate for one moment the importance and significance of the Bill or the far-reaching consequences that it will have for our docks and for our dockers. The hon. Gentleman is right. I believe that the situation that will apply in our docks after the Bill has reached the statute book will be greatly superior to that which we have endured for so long to the great disadvantage of our country and of those who work under the present scheme.

I reject the accusations of the shadow Leader of the House. I believe that the motion is entirely justified. I look forward to the Bill reaching the statute book.

4.5 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and others have said, it is inevitable that Ministers and others will change their minds about particular forms of legislation that have been before the House. Nobody would advance the idea that such changes should be denounced just because they are changes. That would be utterly absurd on any day of the week, let alone on a day when my party may be discussing policies elsewhere.

However, it is a matter of great importance to the House that, when changes are made—especially dealing with previous agreements that may have been made with great sections of the community—those changes should be carried through in a way which at least to some degree conforms with the House's conventions, which have been established to protect people's good faith and previous agreements.

I have a sort of double interest in the dock labour scheme and what the Leader of the House has proposed. I am interested because I recall what happened both when I was Leader of the House and when the dock labour scheme was discussed. It is bad faith for the Government to do what they are proposing, partly for the reasons that have been elaborated by my hon. Friends, which I will reiterate, and partly because of what happened some years ago.

Between 1970 and 1979, both under the Administration of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and under the Labour Government, there were many discussions between dockers' leaders and employers

and people engaged in the dock industry, after which it was agreed to continue the dock labour scheme, partly because of what occurred just after the war—casual employment and all the horrors associated with that—and because later we wished to establish the scheme on a more far-reaching basis. That was why we introduced the Dock Work Regulation Bill in 1976 on which there was a guillotine motion.

However, the Leader of the House and, I am sorry to say, the Secretary of State for Employment appear to forget the agreements that were made between dockers' leaders, the trade unions—chiefly the Transport and General Workers Union, although it was not the sole union dealing with the docks—and the dock employers. There was an agreement between Lord Aldington and Jack Jones, which was known as the Jones-Aldington agreement. It was the basis on which they provided for the future of the industry for a number of years ahead.

As often happens in properly conducted industrial affairs, concessions were made on both sides, and agreement was reached between the representative of the employers, Lord Aldington, and Jack Jones, who represented the Transport and General Workers Union. They came to a bargain, but the Government have torn it up.

I am sure that Lord Aldington would never have been a party to such a procedure as this. Indeed, I wonder whether the Government have ever asked him or those who speak for him on these matters what he thinks about it. An agreement was reached between the employers, represented by Lord Aldington, and the unions, represented by Jack Jones. If, for whatever reasons, it is to be departed from, the Government should say, "Let us negotiate. Let us see what we agreed before and how we may change it." The Department of Employment should have followed that procedure, whatever Lord Aldington had to say. That is why it is so disgraceful for the Department to proceed in this way without any offer of negotiations.

Time and again when the Bill was discussed the other day my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) put the Government on the spot when he said, "Won't you agree to negotiations? Why have you rejected them? Why not have negotiations now? There is still a chance." Every offer and every suggestion of a way to settle the matter by negotiation rather than by dispute was mooted by my hon. Friend in a most admirable speech for the Opposition.

If peace breaks down, the guilt will rest directly on the Government Front Bench. The chief guilt lies with the Secretary of State for Employment, but now it must be shared by the Leader of the House, who is a party to this method of deceiving the House of Commons. This is a deceit. Not many weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) and I were present when the matter was discussed. The Government gave not the slightest sign that they would change their mind and depart from the agreement. In a sense they accepted our arguments and rejected those on the Order Paper tabled by Tory Members. Again, that does not bind the Government for ever, but if they wished to be honest in changing the position they should have talked to the unions, the dockers and the House of Commons about it. Instead, they did the whole manoeuvre behind everybody's backs.

That is why I say that the Leader of the House has behaved disgracefully. He could have stopped this. He could have said, "All right, first let's see if we can negotiate with those with whom we negotiated previously. Let us see whether the unions consider the circumstances to be as much changed as the employers do."

The Government have torn up an agreement which was reached despite great difficulties in the docks. They have torn it up unilaterally. How can they think that they can ever say convincingly to workers, "You must stand by your agreements. You must not break any agreement," when they have broken up most brazenly the whole agreement between employers, the Government and dock workers?

The other day we had exchanges about how the Government would operate these guillotine motions. The Leader of the House has come near to telling us that he favours a permanent system of timetable motions. We all know that that has been debated frequently in the House and that the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure favours the proposal, but the House has always rejected it, and rightly so.

Even when I was in government and wanted to use timetable motions—I was forced to use them in certain circumstances, to maintain any sort of rights for the Government—I was opposed to having a system of gullotine motions settled in advance, which is what the right hon. Gentleman is now moving towards. The Leader of the House is doing so surreptitiously. He did not have the nerve to tell the country and the House about the exact procedure for dealing with the dock labour scheme and, in the same way, he has not told us exactly what he intends to do about this procedure. He seems to favour a settled system of timetable motions, and he is moving pretty fast towards it. He has introduced more guillotine motions than any other Leader of the House. That is all the more indefensible for a Leader of the House whose Government have such a huge majority. Almost all the measures would have been passed through the House quite easily without being guillotined.

This Bill may have taken a bit longer, but, with the Government's huge majority, it would still have been passed. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman would not have forfeited the measure. It appears from what the right hon. Gentleman says that he favours a full timetable system before Bills are introduced. I oppose that, as should all Opposition parties and Governments with any sense about Parliament's future.

Such automatic and wide-ranging timetable motions play straight into the hands of the Government. They give the Government every power to complete the business, whatever the opposition from whatever quarter, and however deceitfully the Government have operated, even if they have gone behind the backs of the House, as they have with the dock labour scheme. The Government know that the legislation will go through. I hope that the House of Commons will always reject regular timetable motions which the right hon. Gentleman seems to be moving towards, even if he has not yet had the nerve to put it forward as a general proposition.

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman makes a serious point. However, he is not being in any way fair. I made it abundantly clear that I did not agree with the report of the Select Committee on Procedure that recommended the automatic timetabling of public Bills, and I got into a fair amount of trouble for doing so. I have resisted following that recommendation. I have brought in

[Mr. Wakeham]

timetabling earlier than in the past, although not by an enormous number of hours, in order to give better consideraton to the legislation. It is better for the House to work as closely as possible with agreement on both sides. A strong body of opinion in the House wants automatic timetabling of Bills. However, I do not agree with that, for the reasons described by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

Mr. Foot: I am glad to hear the right hon. Gentleman say that. Anybody who was listening to him a few minutes ago would have drawn a different conclusion. He was near to applauding the Liberals' most ill-advised proposal that timetabling should be done on a regular basis. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has had a conversion on this heavily trafficked road to Damascus and that we have plucked him back to righteousness on that crowded thoroughfare, although I do not know how long he will stay there.

The right hon. Gentleman and I had a slight difference of opinion one evening last week. I quoted to him the extraordinary statement about guillotine motions made by Lord Whitelaw. Lord Whitelaw was being interviewed by Mr. Brian Walden and, as I said, I was not sure who was interviewing whom. Brian Walden laid it on thick about the wretched, shoddy, fifth-rate legislation that was being passed through the House of Lords and the House of Commons with no proper preparation. No hon. Member would doubt the truth of his allegations about the quality of the Government's legislation. However, to my surprise —because he is a genial fellow—Lord Whitelaw said that I was responsible for this position.

When I come to my final day I shall be perfectly prepared to answer for quite a number of parliamentary sins and I know them better than any other hon. Member. However, I shall not be made answerable for the shady and shoddy legislation which the right hon. Gentleman shovels through the House in the most disreputable manner. This is another example of it. The legislation being forced through the House is deteriorating rapidly.

I do not blame the draftsmen; I know what pressures are put on them. Bad legislation was pushed through last year—the poll tax, and so on—and at the fag end of the autumn the right hon. Gentleman had to introduce another half dozen guillotine motions to get the stuff through by the final day. Now, it is happening again.

It is even worse in this Session. All who sat through the two debates on the official secrets Bill know what a shoddy piece of legislation it is. Yet the Government hardly permitted a single amendment of substance to the measure, in this or the other place. The right hon. Gentleman and the Conservative party have an even bigger and more irresponsible majority in the House of Lords than they can manipulate here; that is becoming a dangerous thing for British democracy.

I do not believe that pleas from me or others will change the right hon. Gentleman's mind. The House now has no proper access to the Cabinet. The first business of the Cabinet should involve the Leader of the House telling the Prime Minister and reporting faithfully to the elective dictatorship what has occurred in the House. If the right hon. Gentleman had done that job properly in recent weeks and months, he would have had to report that the Government might have won a few votes but had hardly ever won a debate. I challenge anyone to deny that what I am saying was true of the official secrets debate and of the last measures on which the right hon. Gentleman introduced a guillotine. He left it a bit late last time—we still had quite a good debate. He will not run that risk again. This time the chopper comes down even more quickly.

It is even more evil when the guillotine is applied to a measure that is of importance not only to the way in which we conduct our affairs here but to people of the country who are of great importance—the dockers. They have as many rights as others. The judges can tell the Government that they must have a chance to discuss proposals before they are shovelled through over their heads; the dockers have as much right to say that as the judges.

The right hon. Gentleman has made a grave mistake by introducing this measure, and he has done great injury to the House. In Cabinet on Thursday he should report that fact and advise the Government not to have another guillotine for a few weeks, because the British House of Commons will not stand for this for ever.

4.23 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I welcome the motion. It is important to move on and reach conclusions on this subject.

In Committee, it has been openly admitted several times, particularly by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), that Opposition Members intend to string out the proceedings as long as possible. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby has diligently attended when he has made speeches—but that is about all. He has been quick to leave as soon as he finishes.

I was interested to hear the shadow Leader of the House say that things were going from bad to worse. He implied that today's business had been changed to try to coincide with the tube strike. Next he will accuse the Government of having been behind the Underground management's move in the courts to try to have the strike delayed—a strange accusation. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is short of accusations to make, but he cannot defend the sort of tactics which his fellow hon. Members have deployed in Committee. They have tried to keep the Committee going for as long as possible without contributing to the debate. He said that he wanted the debate to be long. Nobody objects to lengthy debates, so long as they are genuine, but the Chairman of the Standing Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), has had to call hon. Members to order. For example, he said recently:

"I must admit that I am waiting with eager anticipation for the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to refer to the amendments rather than explaining why he was not present during the previous sitting."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 May 1989; c. 124.]

The Chairman has had to make that sort of statement on many occasions.

Labour Members have made the strange suggestion that we introduced this legislation to promote a strike. That is an odd claim, even by their standards, because we take pleasure in the knowledge that the number of strikes has fallen dramatically since we have made unions more accountable to their members for their actions. Strikes hurt the nation's economy and its reputation.

Mr. Loyden: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the number of strikes has been reduced, not for the reasons

that he suggests but because trade unions have had a steel ring put round them by legislation? That makes it virtually impossible for strike action to occur without endangering not just union finances but possibly the unions themselves. But workers continue to worry about what is happening to their industries as a result of measures being taken by the Government.

Mr. McLoughlin: I cannot see the hon. Gentleman's objection to trade unions having to ballot their members before strikes are called. He may be right to say that that impedes the activities of the unions, but it gives rights to trade unionists, those who must earn a living and who sometimes must accept action which is imposed on them and which they would prefer not to take. If we are charged with having returned trade unions to their members, I plead guilty with pleasure. Indeed, it could be said that trade union legislation has not gone far enough. After all, a strike lasting 12 months occurred against British Coal, when a number of us wanted to go to work and in the end succeeded in doing so.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman knows about mining—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] He represents part of Derbyshire and I believe he was a miner. He occupies one of the greatest Tory seats in the country, embodying, among other places, Chatsworth house. Is he not aware of the fundamental difference between dictatorship and democracy—the right to withdraw one's labour? It is now virtually impossible for workers to engage in that democratic right because the anti-trade union laws make it likely that unions will have their funds sequestrated.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman is obviously at total odds with all the trade unions reforms that we have introduced. Perhaps that is why the Labour party does not intend to repeal a number of them—*[Interruption.]*—according to those attending a great meeting that is taking place today at the home of the very trade union that has most to fear from the legislation that we are discussing.

What will be the effect of the Bill at the end of the day? We have been told of non-scheme ports——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall complete the point that I am making before I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

We know that some workers in non-scheme ports are earning more than their counterparts in scheme ports, and it seems that the Opposition are determined that that should continue. They are not prepared to allow individuals to earn the money they want.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that Transport house is still the headquarters of the Labour party? If so, he is some years out of date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Of course I am not suggesting that. I know that the Labour party's headquarters is at Walworth road. The meeting of today's national executive committee is taking place at Transport house. At least, that is what the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said when he was about to attend the meeting to condemn everything that appears in the documents that are to be discussed. The right hon. Gentleman agrees with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). He thinks that every piece of trade union reform legislation that the Government have introduced should be repealed. That is not what the Leader of the Opposition is saying.

I am aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am being side-tracked. I am sure that you would soon call me back to order if I were to continue to stray, as it were.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am glad to have the opportunity to intervene in my hon. Friend's speech before he leaves the important issues of industrial relations in the docks and the Labour party's attitude to them. I understand that a meeting will take place today and tomorrow to fudge and mudge, to quote the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). Has my hon. Friend seen the transcript of the television programme "On the Record"? I refer to the programme on 23 April entitled "Union Powers Under a Labour Government", during which the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) promised that a Labour Government would bring back secondary picketing. What does my hon. Friend think the effect of that would be on labour relations?

Mr. McLoughlin: I think that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who leads for the Opposition in Committee, found himself in a dilemma. We learned after he made that statement that he was not speaking for the Labour party officially. Instead, he was speaking in a personal capacity. My hon. Friends and I asked the hon. Gentleman in Committee whether he was speaking as an Opposition spokesman or in a personal capacity. I do not want to dwell on that issue any longer.

Shortly after it was announced that the Bill would be introduced to the House of Commons, I heard an interesting interview with the hon. Member for Oldham, West on the Jimmy Young programme. Jimmy Young asked the hon. Gentleman whether the Labour party felt so strongly about the Bill that it would reintroduce the dock labour scheme as a matter of urgency if there were another Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman gave an interesting answer. He said that Jimmy Young had asked a purely hypothetical question. I was not sure what was hypothetical—another Labour Government or the reintroduction of the dock labour scheme. The hon. Gentleman did not make that clear. Probably both events are hypothetical. The Labour party has been reluctant to declare that it feels so strongly about this measure——

Mr. Meacher: I have given no interview to any Jimmy Young show on this issue. What the hon. Gentleman says is pure rubbish.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman had better find out——[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] In view of the hon. Gentleman's statement, I most definitely withdraw. I can only say that someone who gave the name of the hon. Member for Oldham, West was interviewed on BBC Radio 2 about three or four weeks ago. I shall check the record, as I am sure will the hon. Gentleman. However, if he says that he gave no interview on the Jimmy Young show, I withdraw.

Throughout our consideration of the Bill in Committee, the hon. Member for Oldham, West has been reluctant to say that there would be circumstances in which the Labour party would be eager to reintroduce the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Jimmy Young programme often picks up news interviews and that it may well have used an interview from another part of the BBC? Was it not noticeable that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) did not say that he disagreed with my hon. Friend's argument? He did not say that that was not what he was saying in other interviews. Perhaps it is merely that he did not say what my hon. Friend has suggested was said by him during a Jimmy Young programme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Member for Oldham, West was certainly very reluctant to say that a Labour Government would reintroduce the scheme. In Committee, he found it difficult even to justify the present scheme. Instead, the Opposition referred back to other documents, saying that they would like to talk about the scheme and expressing the view that it needs changes—but they have not made any concrete proposals.

However, in Committee we heard a number of comments such as that made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby about my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). The hon. Gentleman said:

"The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) is a new Member and does not know the ways of Parliament. In these circumstances the only power available to the Opposition is that of argument and delay. It is our only weapon, especially against a Government who so shamelessly misuse their powers."

When I challenged the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, he replied:

"I shall underline the simple constitutional point for the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), who seems too obtuse to grasp it. The Opposition's only weapon is delay. That weapon will be deployed in proportion to the Government's intransigence in trying to force the Bill through. If they behave in this fashion the weapon of delay will be mobilised at length."—[*Official Report, Standing Committe A*, 2 May 1989; c. 216, 225.]

Any negotiations that may have taken place had no impact on the activities of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, who was recently sacked from the Opposition Front Bench because he started work with a new television company. Incidentally, his attendance at Standing Committee A was a little questionable, but that is fair enough. He still made speeches of great length and took up the time of the Committee. He let the cat out of the bag, saying that the Opposition's only intention was to delay the Bill's progress through the Committee, come what may.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The hon. Gentleman, in quoting from the *Official Report* of Standing Committee A, attempts to suggest that it was only the Opposition who tried to introduce delay. If that is so, perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain the remark made by the Chairman of that Committee, who is not a member of the Labour party, when he said:

"It must be about two hours since I heard anything relevant to the amendments."

Then, in response to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), the Chairman commented:

"My remarks applied to hon. Members on both sides of the Committee, including the Minister."

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain the misuse of time by the incompetent bunch of Ministers who serve on the Committee. It is their inability to answer questions properly that delayed the proceedings. That was highlighted by the Committee's Tory Chairman when he said:

"Thoughts have been expressed on both sides of the Committee, from the Treasury Bench and elsewhere, in interventions."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 May 1989; c. 221.]

From that it is clear that ministeral team's incompetence has delayed the Bill.

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree that the Chairman of the Committee made that point. However, in fairness to the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who wound up the debate, I point out that he was trying to respond to some of the spurious points made by Opposition Members. I should be happy to produce a full breakdown of the time taken by Opposition Members in that Committee. A lot of time wasting went on, but most of it came from those hon. Members who spoke the longest. A full breakdown of the time taken by the various speakers will give my right hon. and hon. Friends nothing to worry about, because their interventions were short and to the point. Many of the comments that have been quoted suggest that the Opposition have wasted a tremendous amount of time.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Like me, the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Committee. Can he cite one occasion on which any Conservative Back Benchers have made any contribution whatever?

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He cannot accuse us of delaying the Committee and making spurious points, and tell us off for not taking part. That, I think, sums up our case. The charge against Conservative Members this afternoon is that we have not taken part in the debates—that we have stood back to let the Opposition have their say if they want, and that after 29 hours we have still not managed to complete the stand part debate on clause 1.

For a number of reasons, I think it absolutely right for us to move forward to get the Bill on to the statute book—not least for the benefit of those employed under the dock labour scheme. I do not know whether Labour Members are going round saying, "We are fighting this tooth and nail in the House of Commons and we will try to stop it getting through," but that is unfair on those employed in the dock labour scheme: their uncertainty must be put to an end as quickly as possible. I think that all Conservative Members will give wholehearted support to the motion.

4.41 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Much of the debate has proceeded on the basis that the Government have either changed their mind or not done so; that there is a reason for the Bill, or no reason for it. The interesting thing is, however, that from beginning to end no single Minister or Back Bencher has said why it was necessary to introduce the Bill at this time.

We know, of course, that there have been discussions about the dock labour scheme for many years. The Government sometimes seem to operate as though they were in a fog of ignorance: they keep saying that the scheme must be changed, but the truth is that the scheme as it is now is quite different from the scheme as it was first introduced. Several changes have been made, and each of those changes has been arrived at through discussion and sometimes argument. Both sides have recognised that nothing is immutable: when a scheme is in operation for

more than 40 years, some wrinkles may be expected to develop. Alterations in technology and in patterns of trade are expected to warrant change, which should be considered openly.

Our charge against the Government is that they have not considered the issue openly. Every time that it has been raised in this Session, they have said—certainly by implication, and in some instances specifically—that they have no plans to tackle the dock work labour scheme in the current Parliament. I defy anyone to produce a precedent—other than emergency war legislation, for instance—for the publication of a White Paper on one day and a Bill on the next, and the application of the guillotine within a month. There is neither precedent nor reason for such action.

There is an inconsistency that no one can understand in what the Government are saying, which is why the Bill must be debated fully. The Secretary of State has trumpeted that this grand design will produce 50,000 jobs; the strange thing is that the Bill provides for £25 million in redundancy pay, which means that between 1,400 and 2,500 people are to be made redundant. That is an odd way of creating jobs—sacking nearly one third of the labour force at the outset. It will not bear close examination.

The White Paper and the Minister's speech on Second Reading cited Aberdeen harbour as one of the reasons why it was essential that the Bill should be introduced with such haste. The record must be put straight. There have been no industrial relations problems in the port of Aberdeen of any kind that would justify the legislation. There has been a dispute in the fish market, which is part of Aberdeen docks, but the record has to be set straight. The difficulties were not due to the fish market porters. There have been many problems in the fishing industry. There have been quota changes; much less fish has been landed throughout the United Kingdom; there have been changes in the pattern of catches; the big trawlers no longer sail from Aberdeen, partly because of economic circumstances. The fish landing company therefore went bust; it could not pay its way. Only 12 months ago it under-estimated how much fish would be landed in Aberdeen. That had nothing to do with the scheme: it was purely circumstantial.

After the company virtually went into liquidation, the Aberdeen harbour board took up the burden of trying to obtain a new licence and establish a new company. I do not blame the harbour board for seeking to make changes in working practices and in the hours worked. However, it was more than reasonable that the fish market porters should say, "If you want to change our working conditions and if you want us to work longer, we expect some recompense for it." If their working conditions were to be changed, why should they not expect to receive some recompense for it?

These matters were still under discussion when the White Paper was published. It seems that in his haste the Secretary of State did not realise that there were difficulties at Aberdeen. As there have been no consultations and discussions, the establishment of a new fish landing company is in abeyance. Neither the Aberdeen harbour board nor the trade union knows how to continue the discussions. They do not know what is to happen. That is crazy.

The result of the Secretary of State's precipitate decision is that some fish market porters are being treated differently from others. Had I spoken in a debate when the White Paper was published, I might have commended the Secretary of State for acceding to the request of Aberdeen Members of Parliament to meet the whole of the redundancy cost—£25,000—to compensate those who have to leave the industry as a result of restructuring. Even today I might also commend him for that. However, it is quite clear that he deliberately and provocatively deceived those people into taking £25,000 in severence pay, hoping that it would all be out of the way before the offer of £35,000 came on the scene.

Some of the fish market porters accepted the £25,000 redundancy payment, while others were allowed to take their names off the list. Those who applied for the £25,000 redundancy payment were told after the £35,000 announcement, "Hard luck, your name has already gone in. The Secretary of State, by not letting on what was happening, has cost you £10,000, but that's your hard luck." I do not understand how the Secretary of State, on his salary, could justify deliberately deceiving men into accepting a lower redundancy payment than the one which would be on offer a couple of days later. It was a disgraceful abuse of his parliamentary privilege.

The Secretary of State was not concerned about the loss of £10,000 by each man. All he was concerned about was getting as many people as possible to take the £25,000, which he said he would meet in full, so that—I hope that the Secretary of State is listening because, although he may think it is of no account, this is a very serious matter—by this deceitful method he could save his friends, the employers, £17,500 per man. That will be their share of the transitional payments. We have a right to be told when the Government made up their minds to introduce the Bill. On what day did they decide to introduce it? Did they realise the discrimination that they would create in Aberdeen by announcing, in the middle of discussions about restructuring the fish landing company, that they intended to introduce the Bill?

I have written to the Secretary of State about one case. I hope that he will at least be generous enough to say that some people were caught out. He will plead his innocence—I should be surprised if he pleaded his guilt—and say that it is unfortunate. I hope that the Secretary of State will be prepared to consider the issue of fish market porters who negotiated in good faith but accepted a lower redundancy payment than is currently available.

On Monday 3 April—again, the deception involved was enormous—negotiations between the Aberdeen harbour board and the trade union appeared to be moving smoothly. Fair concessions were being made and much hard bargaining was being done, but negotiations were moving. I am told by union representatives in Aberdeen that on Wednesday the board suddenly did not want to know. I have not consulted Aberdeen harbour board, which might hold a different view, but the men feel bitter and sour. They believe that the Government tipped off employers and that employers decided that all negotiations were off and prepared to ride out the storm because they knew that the Government were to scrap the scheme. I hope that the Secretary of State will stop pretending that the position at Aberdeen fish market had anything to do with the abolition of the scheme.

Aberdeen has had a magnificent investment and trade record over the years. A few years ago, the harbour was in such a rotting state that if its gates were not closed when the tide went out the harbour would collapse. In negotiations with employers, a trade union convenor used to say, "If you do not settle by 5 o'clock, I will wave my

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

hankie at the window and the dock gates will not be shut." Employers capitulated immediately, because they knew that the port would collapse.

I accept that Aberdeen has benefited from North sea oil and changing industrial conditions. The dock labour scheme has done nothing to hold back Aberdeen's development as a port. Investment in, and industrial relations at, the port have been very good, so the Minister cannot use that as a reason for this precipitate action or the guillotine.

No reason has been given for the lack of discussion between the Government, unions and employers. It is not as though there has not been sufficient time for those discussions to take place. When I was the Labour party's shadow transport spokesman, I had extensive discussions with trade unions and the National Association of Port Employers. We held long and detailed discussions about the way forward. The National Association of Port Employers always said that it was willing to negotiate and discuss matters, but again no explanation has been given for its change of mind. It was seized of the need for moderation and understood that change would occur only through discussion with unions. I warned it—and I warn it now—that if change were required and desirable, it would come about only if a proper package were put before unions and employers.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Surely the point that the hon. Gentleman is making—I appreciate that he is making it in good faith and for the highest reasons—is undermined by the fact that Mr. John Connolly, who is convenor of the docks section of the Transport and General Workers Union, made it abundantly clear that there was no negotiation on the dock labour scheme and that it was outside consideration altogether.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman displays his complete ignorance of industrial relations. Any initiative had to be taken by port employers; no package had been put before the unions. If employers had been asked, "Will you be prepared to negotiate at the end of the dock labour scheme?" they would not have said, "Yes, we will negotiate," without any idea of what was in mind. What utter nonsense. I do not know what business the hon. Gentleman is in, but if he signed a contract on the understanding that its conditions would be changed later and its details thrashed out, he would be bankrupt before very long.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I should like to get on; many hon. Members wish to speak.

I told the National Association of Port Employers that it would have to be prepared to accept a national negotiation scheme. It said, "Yes, we understand that." I said, "You must realise that the national pension scheme will have to be maintained." It said, "Yes, we understand that." On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that nothing in the Bill would change the pension scheme, but that does not appear to be what employers think. They are saying, "These things will have to be discussed later." In every privatisation of a public company, be it railways, buses or airports, the Government have always frozen the existing pension scheme and said that new pension arrangements must be negotiated with the new company. Under the Bill, there will be individual discussions port by port. I warn employers that workers will not wear that.

I warned the National Association of Port Employers that the national training scheme would have to be maintained. It said, "Yes, of course; that is what we want to happen." Part of the employers' case—I am surprised that Conservative Members have put the employers' case so badly—has been that the national dock labour scheme made it difficult to recruit and train new employees. That is nonsense, but it is what they said. If we take the Government at face value, it is clear that they have reneged again on this issue, because the White Paper makes it clear that these matters are best dealt with port by port.

The national medical scheme for dockers, which is one of the best of its kind in any industry, is to be broken up and decided port by port. I told the National Association of Port Employers that there would have to be some sort of national contract and some security of employment. After 10 years of Tory government, we know that no one in industry has security of employment in the sense that we should like, but there must be some security, guarantee or promise that there will be no return to casual labour. Employers have said, "We shall not return to casual labour," but the truth is that they are doing so. Port employers have said that they want a core labour force to meet the minimum throughput of a port. They want to take on additional labour as and when it is required. If that is not casual labour, I do not know what is. They must stop using language that is completely different from reality.

The Bill will scrap all the negotiations and agreements that have been built up over many years, which is why it must be properly discussed. It is unprecedented, because I do not know of any Bill that says that, in the interests of haste, a public body will be directed to sell its assets at below market value simply to get things through. That is astonishing and would be fraudulent in ordinary business—it is certainly fraudulent in thought.

The Government are not concerned about industrial relations. I do not know what will happen about the dockers' ballot, and it is not a matter in which I should intervene. I am a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, and I should resent it if my colleagues advised me how to deal with industrial relations. Therefore, I shall not presume to advise the Transport and General Workers Union on a matter with which it must deal.

Whatever the outcome, the Secretary of State must be in no doubt that relationships in the ports industry will be soured for many years to come. There will be a running sore, port by port, as employers scramble to drive down conditions as hard as they possibly can. The Secretary of State shakes his head, but I must confess a sense of disappointment and bitterness, to put it mildly, that the National Association of Port Employers allowed itself to be carried by hysteria whipped up by Conservative Back Benchers, or, to be more suspicious, connived in the whipping up of that hysteria. I am deeply disappointed that the many hours of negotiations I had with it, in which I accepted what was said in good faith, have been set aside, either because it was unwilling to stand up to the Government or for some other reason. People will draw their own conclusions.

I am proud that the voters of the Vale of Glamorgan took the decision they did. It marks a turning point in history. The witch's spell has been broken and the 10 years'

celebratory events which were supposed to happen last week turned out not to be a celebration. People's minds have been concentrated on events. They are beginning to understand that the Government, who have had an unprecedented opportunity, with their large majority and the large North sea oil revenues, to make this country one of the best industrially——

Mr. McLoughlin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I will not.

The Government have destroyed every opportunity and ordinary people's belief in Government. The time will soon come when they will rue the day.

5 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Debates on timetable motions have become a ritual in recent years. It is interesting to look back at the history of timetable motions to see how debates were prolonged in the 19th century and how Governments then tackled the problem of Opposition Members speaking for the sake of speaking without wishing legislation to progress. The record for speaking in the House is held by Henry Brougham who, on 7 February 1828, spoke for six hours on law reform. In more recent times, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) have both spoken at great length. In the past week, we have had an example of a three-hour speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars), following in the footsteps of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who spoke for three hours earlier this year.

Long speeches in the House, although rare, are not unknown and in Committee, the records are even longer. The record is held by the Gas Bill in 1948, when the debate lasted for 49 hours non-stop from 10.30 am 11 May 1948 to 12.8 pm on 12 May. A fairly recent example was the former hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme, Mr. Golding, who spoke for more than 11 hours on the British Telecommunications Bill in 1982.

The Government of 1887 brought in a guillotine, because they became frustrated by the fact that legislation on Irish matters was continually held up. The record for a sitting of the House was on an Irish matter in 1881, when the House sat for 41½ hours continuously on the Protection of Personal Property (Ireland) Bill. Although we have not had so long a sitting recently, I recall that in the past year, we sat for about 29 hours on a private Bill and lost the following day's business.

Debates on timetable motions tend to be rather ritualistic.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Just to get the record correct, the longest speech recently was made by our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) in the debate on fluoridation. His speech was longer than that of Mr. Golding.

Mr. Bennett: I do not think that my hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton spoke for about four hours, whereas Mr. Golding spoke for 11 hours in Committee. Our hon. and learned Friend did not speak for as long as that in the Chamber.

Mr. Holt: I believe that it was 14 hours.

Mr. Bennett: I am referring to debates in the Chamber.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is going through history and saying that long speeches are rare occurrences. Does he intend to do a repeat performance—if so, he should perhaps warn the House first—or is he merely saying that such events happened in the past?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is being a bit unfair. He spoke for 19 minutes, whereas I have been speaking for only three minutes. I was merely giving a little historical background to the debate, which would not come amiss.

It was interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) who, as always, managed to get the facts wrong, when he used them, and to get the arguments wrong, when he put any forward. He told us that the Government wanted a timetable motion today because a tube strike was due to take place, so the public would tie the two events together and rush to vote Conservative in the European elections on 15 June. He told us that the Government wanted a dock strike. He did not tell us how that could be the case, given that a national dock strike would damage the economy and would lead to imports being held up, only to flood in later. Our export potential would also be damaged.

Mr. Robert Hughes: There are reports in today's papers that the Government seek to defend the unprecedented balance of trade deficit while employers are stocking up ready for a dock strike.

Mr. Bennett: Any employer who employs dockers or who uses the ports would be foolish if he did not take account of the words of the Transport and General Workers Union and of the fact that the ballot is taking place now. That is merely to be far-sighted. It does not mean that the Government wish to have a dock strike; it is the Opposition who want a dock strike. The Government have nothing to gain from a strike because it would have long-term adverse effects on our export potential.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras went on to talk about by-elections and, as usual, got his facts wrong. He said that the result in the Vale of Glamorgan last week was the best swing to the Labour party in more than 50 years, going back to the Liverpool, Toxteth by-election in 1935. The hon. Gentleman, who is not in the Chamber now, has a short memory. If we look at the results in the past 20 years, at the Hayes and Harlington by-election in 1971, there was a 16·5 per cent. swing to Labour. In Southend, East in 1980, there was a 12·9 per cent. swing. In Brecon and Radnor, there was a 15 per cent. swing and Labour nearly won the seat, narrowly coming second to the Liberals. Only three years ago in Fulham, there was a swing of 10·9 per cent. It is not unexpected for a Government to do badly in mid-term by-elections and we know, as do the victors of Fulham and Ryedale by-elections in 1986, that winning a by-election is no long-term predictor of the next general election. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras could not get right a simple matter such as that.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend will remember that, between 1976 and 1979, under the last Labour Government, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who was Leader of the House, introduced many guillotine motions. It is interesting to note that during that period, there were some spectacular Labour party losses, with

[Mr. Hind]

massive swings against them, especially in mining constituencies in the midlands, such as Ashfield, which was won by our hon. Friend the present Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is right. When the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was Leader of the House, he guillotined five Bills in a day. The Wales Bill and the Scotland Bill had guillotines introduced immediately after Second Reading. We need take no lessons from the right hon. Gentleman when he speaks to the House about liberty and freedom, because his record of introducing guillotines in one day is unmatched by any other hon. Member.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend care to remind the House of the swing in the Glasgow, Govan by-election?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. There are several hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate, which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is short. I appeal for brief speeches and, even more, for hon. Members to keep to the subject on the Order Paper.

Mr. Bennett: I can resist the temptation to answer the question, although my hon. Friend knows that there was no swing to Labour in Glasgow, Govan.

Those of us who serve on the Standing Committee on the Bill will have been pleased to hear our right hon. Friend the Leader of the House describe some of the agonies we suffered in Committee. We had to listen to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) speak for two hours, with 10 interruptions. The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who is not in the Chamber, was interrupted no fewer than nine times in just five minutes and was warned by the Chairman for tedious repetition.

As has been recalled by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), the hon. Member for Great Grimsby said:

"the only power available to the Opposition is that of argument and delay."

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West challenged him by saying that he had let the cat out of the bag. The hon. Gentleman said:

"This Committee is rather like an educationally sub-normal class on constitutional law. The Opposition's only effective weapon is delay, which has to expand to counter the brutality of the Government's unacceptable tactics." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 May 1989; c. 216.]

We do not complain about the hon. Member for Great Grimsby speaking at great length. To have an audience of more than 10 after his second job, to which he has "bobbed off", to use a dockers' term, must be a great pleasure for him.

Opposition Members have asked why we need the Bill. I refer them to an editorial in *The Times* of 22 January 1988 about the

"Dark ages in the Docks".

It said:

"Some flavour of the rule book under which registered dockers work is provided by the injunction that dockwork shall exclude 'the loading of carts by horse drivers in the ports of Penzance, Hayle, Portreath, Porthleven and Newlyn' and references to work connected with 'sailing barges and other self-propelled vessels' in the port of Medway."

The leader in *The Times* concluded:

"A Government which believes that adaptability and hard work are the best guarantee of prosperity and employment should have the courage to allow working practices in the docks to be brought into the 1980s."

Mr. Loyden: They would, wouldn't they?

Mr. Bennett: Perhaps a quotation from *Tribune* would be more to the taste of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden). An editorial of 21 April said:

"On so many major issues of economic and industrial policy where the Tories have made really radical proposals over the past decade, Labour has managed to appear to be caught on the hop. A good example is the docks. When did Labour last offer a creative thought about the docks industry that made any impact at all?"

In case *Tribune* is too Left-wing for the hon. Member for Garston, I refer him to a pamphlet issued by the Labour party—admittedly in 1966. The report of Labour's port transport study group said:

"The scheme has failed to bring full decasualisation any closer . . . The evidence we have heard has . . . been unanimous in questioning the value of the NDLB."

That was in 1966, so the Labour party recognised 23 years ago that there were things wrong with the scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does not my hon. Friend find it strange that although that document was produced 23 years ago, and although Labour Governments have been in power since, we still do not know what the Labour party would put in place of the national dock labour scheme? Does my hon. Friend agree that, given 23 years and now a policy review, even the Labour party ought to be able to reach some sort of conclusion?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend has a good point. We await the outcome of the policy review discussions that are taking place today and tomorrow. It is interesting to note that an exit poll in Vale of Glamorgan last week showed that only eight of the 250 people interviewed voted Labour because of the credibility of Labour policies. I suggest that, after the review documents have been analysed and debated, no one will vote for the Labour party on the basis of its policies.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked why the Bill had been introduced without consultation and so quickly and why there had been no discussion with the employers. We have all the evidence that we need that the Transport and General Workers Union is not prepared to discuss the dock labour scheme. For years, the union has said that there can be no debate on the scheme and that it cannot be amended. When challenged in the national joint council's executive committee on 19 March 1986, Mr. John Connolly is reported as saying that

"he doubted . . . whether the employers wanted that kind of discussion, and suggested that they wished instead to talk about the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme. He said that the trade union was not prepared to discuss the abolition of the Scheme."

We have many other quotes from Mr. Connolly. For example, on 12 November last year he said on Channel 4 that any attempt to amend or abolish the national dock scheme would be met with a national dock strike. How can the Government talk to people who will not even consider amending the scheme, let alone accept its abolition? The Opposition are wrong to say that the TGWU is willing to discuss amending the scheme.

In 1986, the director of the National Association of Port Employers wrote to Mr. John Connolly, at the

suggestion of the then Secretary of State, to propose that a meeting be held. Replying on 21 April 1986, Mr. Connolly said:

"In reply to your letter of 6 April 1986, I can advise you that, having in mind our position that the Dock Labour Scheme is to remain, I can see no point in having joint discussions to provide for arrangements which might follow its removal."

We have it in black and white, in correspondence, speeches and television programmes: in the eyes of the TGWU, the scheme must remain. It is not true that the TGWU wants discussion and debate. It is not interested in getting rid of the scheme. It is up to Parliament to legislate for the end of the scheme.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Given the hon. Gentleman's grandparentage, I doubt whether I am alone in finding the degree to which he seems to welcome this move to do down the dockers pretty unseemly. In his ire against the dockers, however, will he not find time to remember that Mr. Connolly and Mr. Todd visited the National Association of Port Employers last month? They offered to negotiate new arrangements for the dockers in the scheme ports on the basis that the workers' conditions would be no less favourable than they are now. Does the hon. Gentleman regard that as an unjustifiable bottom line for a trade union?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman knows that that discussion took place merely so that the trade union could seek to protect itself from any legal proceedings that might result if a strike were called. The simple fact is that the TGWU is having a political dispute with the Government. The employers are not directly concerned with the merits of the dock labour scheme, because they are not in charge of it. It was set up by legislation and only the Government and Parliament can dispose of it. There is no dispute with the employers about the dock labour scheme. The TGWU is trying to persuade the courts, therefore, that the dispute is with the National Association of Port Employers. The TGWU cannot even get away with that, because dockers are employed by individual port employers and not by the National Association of Port Employers. The members of the trade union and Opposition Members in Committee are not interested in getting rid of the scheme; they merely want to replace it with another scheme that is equally restrictive and damaging to our export possibilities.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): At the meeting referred to by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), the employers made it clear that, once the scheme has been abolished, they will be employing people who have been in the scheme on exactly the same basis and with exactly the same terms and conditions as their employees who have never been in the scheme. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is perfectly justifiable and morally acceptable?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no reason why the dockers should be treated differently in law from any other group of workers or why they should have the restrictive practices and protection that they have at present. With the increase in Britain's export potential and the strengthening of the economy, there is no doubt that plenty of jobs will be available in the docks in the coming years. We merely wish to remove this ridiculous scheme, which is holding up the redevelopment of inner-city areas and clamping down on dock development.

It is interesting to examine the question asked by the Transport and General Workers Union of the registered dock workers this week. The ballot paper is headed:

"Trade dispute with your employer"—

that brings me back to the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway)—

"including all matters arising out of and in consequence of that dispute".

The question is:

"Are you prepared to take part in a strike?"

and the dock workers are asked to answer yes or no. The ballot paper does not tell the registered dock workers what the dispute is. This must be the first secret ballot in which the question itself has been kept secret. It is extraordinary that the trade union is not prepared to include in the ballot paper the nature of the dispute. It has done that because it knows that there is no trade dispute with the employers, that it is a dispute with the Government, who are introducing a Bill to get rid of the scheme.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has a long record of making speeches about the dock work scheme and the strike. The hon. Gentleman challenged remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West about quotations from speeches that he may or may not have made on the radio, and I accept what he said about that. It turns out that it may have been the Leader of the Opposition who was speaking. The hon. Member for Oldham, West said on Radio Lancashire news on 10 April this year, in answer to the question whether there would be a dock strike:

"frankly we have no alternative but to support, if there were a strike."

The views of the hon. Member for Oldham, West are clearly on record. It is the Labour party that wants a strike, not the Government.

I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) notice that I would mention his comments earlier in the debate, although I understand that he has now gone to meet the President of Nicaragua. The hon. Member may have a good time when he is there. He talked about Tory Members having dinners with the port employers. That is very interesting, but I have a list of dinners that Labour Members have had with the port employers.

At the National Association of Port Employers reception at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre on 15 December last, the hon. Member for Garston was taking the entertainment of NAPE. The hon. Members for Great Grimsby, for Liverpool, West Derby, for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) were also invited. They accepted, but, unfortunately, did not turn up. Other hon. Members attended, but they did not sign the visitors' book. In June 1988, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North had lunch with the port employers. On 2 March, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was at the Mayfair hotel to discuss the dock labour scheme. On 7 March, the hon. Member for Oldham, West had a meeting at the House of Commons with the National Association of Port Employers about it. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East had two lunches with NAPE in July 1988 and in Jaunary 1989.

Opposition Members not only have lunch with the Transport and General Workers Union but are busy lunching off the National Association of Port Employers.

[Mr. Bennett]

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West should be careful when he talks about people who lunch, as though it were some way of getting into hock with employers, when Labour Members on the Committee appear to dine more frequently with port employers than Conservative Members might.

The real reason we are getting rid of the scheme is that it is totally indefensible. When one looks at the examples of ports where registered dock work schemes are in use, time and again, one finds that ghosting takes place. For those hon. Members who are not on the Dock Work Bill Committee, I should explain that ghosting occurs when a registered dock worker stands by while another man does the job and they both get paid for doing it, thus doubling the cost of the work. It is specially prevalent in the constituency of the hon. Member for Garston. There are plenty of examples. It takes place in Liverpool, Glasgow, Middlesbrough, Cardiff, Bristol and Newport. Wherever one looks one sees examples of ghosting. It occurs on the Medway and in Hunterston.

There is a good example in Grangemouth, which shows why the Bill is necessary. The docks in Grangemouth have been fully automated and require no docker involvement. However, dockers in the port insisted that a ghost docker must be in attendance while unloading takes place. Recognising that there was absolutely no work for that docker to do during the operation, the men demanded that he be provided with a Portakabin fitted with a colour television and a microwave oven. That was so that he might "overcome boredom". The prospective employer did not enter into the contract, and lucrative business was lost to the port.

That sort of behaviour goes on in ports which are under the registered dock work scheme. Not only is ghosting taking place; there is also "bobbing". A registered dock employee signs on and "bobs off" to another job, perhaps running a pub or taxi driving.

Mr. Galloway: What about Tory Members?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman shouts about Tory Members not being present. I will tell the hon. Gentleman about Labour Members on the Committee and their voting records. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West had a 60 per cent. voting record in the House last year. He was 324th in the league. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) came 480th in the league, with a 51 per cent. record. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) had a 59·7 per cent. record, and he came 339th. Who came top of the league? Tory Members. I came 19th in that league. I do not take lectures from the hon. Member for Hillhead. He is the part-timer in the House when it comes to attending debates and taking part. We will look at his voting record, too, if he wishes.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps the reason my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) does not take part in debates is that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) filibusters for so long that it prevents him from doing so.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In the past 10 minutes, I have already appealed to the House for short speeches. There are a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have served on the Committee and are seeking to speak. I should like to call as many hon. Members as possible.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful for your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was provoked by the part-time hon. Member for Hillhead, who spends most of his time bobbing around on trips abroad. He should not lecture us about the people who do the work in this House.

It is worth while to point out why the scheme must go. For years, the national dock labour scheme has ruined opportunities for expanding our ports in inner-city areas. If we examine the record of Felixstowe, which is outside the scheme, contrast it with Ipswich and look at dock labour schemes on both the east and west coasts and compare them with non-scheme ports, we will see the improvements in productivity and trade in non-scheme ports. In 1970, dock scheme ports accounted for 90 per cent. of non-fuel imports into and exports from this country. They now account for 70 per cent. Non-scheme ports are improving their productivity and the amount of trade that they take. They are taking on more workers, but, on their own, they cannot take the full burden of the national economic expansion that is taking place.

We need to make sure that scheme ports are able to operate without restrictive practices—without overmanning—and that they can operate in such a way that they can improve their facilities and compete with continental ports. With 1992 approaching and with the need to make management decisions today and not in 1992, it is right that we should abolish restrictive practices and ensure that our ports and docks have an opportunity to expand to meet the challenge of an expanding economy.

5.25 pm

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): If the House were looking for a good example of how to waste 25 minutes of parliamentary time discussing a guillotine motion, it could not find a better example than the speech of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). He talked about everything under the sun, such as who had lunch and who had dinner with the port employers. It is with some sadness that I tell him that nobody invited me to lunch or dinner. I am always in the market for a good meal and a good discussion.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I will not give way. I do not have time.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was a good example of spirited irrelevance.

I have a rather questionable right to take part in the debate, and I do so only because my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) is prohibited by adverse weather conditions from getting out of his constituency. He would have been in his place as Chief Whip of the Social and Liberal Democrats. His absence puts me in a good position. I am spared the worst excesses of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). His speeches are always long and arduous, but I find them entertaining. That is a saving grace. The debate gives me the opportunity to look at the terms of the guillotine motion in an objective manner.

Although, as a party, my hon. Friends and I are not prepared to defend the continuation of the dock labour scheme, by no stretch of the imagination does it mean that

we are prepared to abandon dockers. Important matters must be resolved and guarantees must be secured before we would be prepared to allow a return to the casual system of dock labour. The Government must give some important guarantees in Committee.

Although, on balance, I favour the terms of the legislation, my hon. Friends and I cannot support the introduction of the guillotine at this time. There are two matters before the House. First, I refer to the use of guillotines in the first instance. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was right: there is a worrying trend in the frequency with which the House resorts to guillotine motions. The hon. Gentleman said that the House had resorted to 11 guillotines in his time in the House. That is a serious matter. Of course I understand that Governments need to get legislation through. Of course I understand that, on previous occasions when Governments have survived by wafer-thin majorities, there are circumstances in which guillotines are necessary. Of course guillotines may have to be imposed when important constitutional questions are involved. But the Government have no impediment in terms of a lack of majority, nor are they troubled by any restraints on parliamentary time this year. As someone who is an objective observer and not a member of the Standing Committee, I advise the Leader of the House that I do not think that he made a case for bringing forward a guillotine after only 29 hours in Standing Committee.

It was admitted earlier that this is essentially a one-clause Bill and if it is, I do not see any danger in having a later guillotine. If the Government had come to the House much further into the Committee's proceedings, they would have found, at least on this Bench, a more willing acceptance of the need to resort to the guillotine. However, in our present position and looking at the special character of this legislation, which I fully understand is party politically contentious—that is obvious to anyone who considers the issue for longer than a second—why have the Government decided to timetable the Standing Committee so soon? We have not had an effective answer to that question and until we do, the House should consider rejecting the motion.

I go further, and say that there are special circumstances with this Bill which make the Government's position even more untenable than the purely constitutional case of the number of hours that the Standing Committee has been able to deliberate on the Bill in detail. The way in which the White Paper and the Bill were suddenly introduced out of the blue bears heavily with me when trying to decide how to vote on the timetable motion.

If one listens to what Conservative Back Benchers have said this afternoon, one realises that they are not interested in any legislative scrutiny. They have said that as there is no prospect of changing the Bill, we should introduce the law straight away, never mind any parliamentary procedure. Unfortunately, that is the way in which the Government are operating more and more. Parliament has been swept aside time after time on contentious issues, despite the Government having a majority in excess of 100.

Special circumstances are involved because of the way in which the Bill was introduced and the transition from the Government saying that there was no need for reform, to the White Paper being introduced on one day, with the Bill on the next, and the guillotine being introduced just one month and 29 hours in Committee after the Bill was published. That is a scandalous timetable for any Government, even for one with a wafer-thin majority, but especially so for one that is dealing with such a finely tested constitutional issue.

The Government have not proved their case. Indeed, from a political point of view, it is inept to bring forward a guillotine this early because it is bound to exacerbate the present delicate state of industrial relations. It will not make anybody's job any easier. It would have been perfectly proper and, indeed, statesmanlike for the Secretary of State for Employment to say, "We will run the Standing Committee slowly. We will take time and allow hon. Members of all parties to table new clauses at the end of our Committee proceedings." However, the Government are bringing forward a timetable motion just 29 hours into the Committee's deliberations. That is a scandalous abuse of procedure.

This is an important Bill and we are anxious to see removed from the statute book what we regard as continuing restrictive practices. However, we do not want to return to the bad old days of casual labour. We need some assurances from the Government and a Government strategy for the ports, not just a return to free markets. We need assurances that go far further than those that we have been able to get to date in the Standing Committee about the need for training and retraining. Above all, we need more time in the Standing Committee to cross-examine the Government, to scrutinise their programmes and to test their plans for the future of the docks industry, which is important to the future of this country.

5.33 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this guillotine debate and must declare an interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) because I, too, have lunched with the port employers.

The guillotine motion is important. Many Conservative members of the Committee have not taken part in the Committee. We have listened and have said nothing on occasions, and we have heard nothing to make us change our minds during the 29 hours that the Bill has been debated. After 29 hours, we have not got beyond clause 1 stand part because the Opposition—I acquit the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) of this charge, because like us he has sat and listened and has not said a great deal—have attempted to replace the dock labour scheme, which the Bill clearly attempts to abolish, with a different scheme. In effect, it would be "son of the dock labour scheme". That idea has been put forward cleverly by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and his hon. Friends, who want to build a new scheme under an entirely different name. We have listened, we have seen that for what it is and we have voted against it time and time again. We have not accepted that any of the arguments have any credence.

Some Opposition Members have spoken at great length in Committee. On one occasion, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) spoke for two and a half hours. Much of his speech was an attack on the Government and on Conservative Members, couched in abusive terms. Four of the Opposition members of the Committee are sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union. The view that I have formed—I am probably not alone in this on the Government side of the Committee—is that they are earning their sponsorship

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

money by fighting Ron Todd's war—the war of the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union—in Committee. They have been dangling like puppets on a string and dancing to his tune.

I can quote the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) who is not in his place, when he told us during one of his long interventions——

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is in the House.

Mr. Hind: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I meant his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is not in his place.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West told us that he viewed the role of the Labour party in Parliament as that of the political arm of the trade union movement and said that that is how he acts. Like Nelson when he put the eyeglass to his blind eye and said, "I see no ships," that is the way in which the Labour party has continued the debate in Committee. Indeed, it could be said that the problem of the dock labour scheme is that, unfortunately, not enough ships are seen in dock labour scheme ports. That is why it was necessary to introduce the Dock Work Bill, which I commend to the House.

In Committee, the Opposition have totally failed to address the major issue that the Bill attacks. In the past, the dock labour scheme has clearly deterred investment because companies will not invest in ports covered by the scheme. That has deprived inner cities of investment in thousands of acres of derelict land in cities such as London, Glasgow and Liverpool, which is on the edge of my constituency. For that reason above all, it has been necessary to introduce the Bill. Employment in scheme ports has contracted, but that point was not addressed by the Opposition in Committee. Trade in scheme ports has declined and the number of registered dock workers has fallen.

In contrast, we have seen the growth in non-dock labour scheme ports that at one time did not exist. They have grown only because of the existence of the dock labour scheme. Non-scheme ports that handled little or no cargo in the 1940s, such as Felixstowe, have adapted, prospered and expanded; they show how modern, well-managed ports can use technology to secure prosperous and well-paid employment. I am afraid that that is in marked contrast to what has happened in dock labour scheme ports.

One point that Conservative Members have tried to address in Committee—the Opposition have totally failed to address this—is that the contract of employment in scheme ports must be the only contract of employment known to English and Scottish law that contains a criminal sanction if the employer employs somebody who is not a registered dock worker, or whatever the scheme implies. Such criminal sanctions are nonsense in this sort of society.

The second point not addressed by the Opposition is the question of jobs for life. In Committee, the Opposition tried to suggest that doctors, lawyers and other people in our society have jobs for life. Although those people can all be made redundant from their jobs, under the dock labour scheme, redundancies to reduce the work force are impossible. When the dock labour scheme is abolished, dockers in scheme ports will find that their terms and conditions will be the same as those for the rest of the working population, which cannot be a bad thing.

It is important to note some of the abuses within the dock labour scheme—for example, ghosting and bobbing. There are examples in Garston and also in Liverpool, where three registered dock workers must be employed each day between Monday and Friday for the reception of scrap on to the quay prior to loading. Those men are ghosts. They play no part in the operation. If the ships are bigger, upwards of 16 ghosts can be employed there. They must be employed by the employers.

Recently in Liverpool, T. and J. Harrison and Bulk Cargo Handling Services were closed. The local employers, who already employed far more labour than they needed, refused the local board's request to take on workers who had been laid off. The unions on the board threatened an immediate local strike, with the possibility of a national strike, if the local employers did not reconsider their decision or if there was any move to place the men on the total unattached register.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I apologise, but I shall not give way.

Liverpool, like many other dock labour scheme ports, has been crucified by this ridiculous scheme. There was no possibility of any meaningful discussions with the Transport and General Workers Union about this scheme. The section convenor, Mr. Connolly, said that there would be no discussion about it. He was supported by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has been quoted in the *Morning Star* and many of the Left-wing journals as saying that, effectively, the Labour party will support the union, as one would naturally expect the Labour party to stand by unions should they find themselves in difficulty over the operation of the dock labour scheme. As recently as the end of March, he is quoted in the *Lancashire News* as saying that that is what will happen. That is what we expect.

We have no intention on this side of the House of forcing a strike. We do not want to force a strike. It is interesting to note that we have seen on the television a combination of Mr. Connolly and the hon. Member for Oldham, West sitting together discussing the matter. Is it not peculiar that there has been no strike during the period of the local government elections? Should we draw the conclusion that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is right in saying that the Labour party is nothing more than the political wing of the trade union movement?

It is clear that, if dockers consider what we are trying to do, they will realise that there is no need for any strike and that the reason the Bill is going through as quickly as possible is that the Government are interested in protecting the national interest. We would be foolish to stand by like Caligula feasting while Rome burns. We on this side of the House and Conservative Members on the Committee have no intention of doing that. I regard the guillotine motion as essential. I hope that the entire House will join me in the Lobby to support it.

5.42 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on a number of occasions referred to Liverpool. I remind the House that those slogans, which are thrust about day by day by Conservative Members, are a thinly disguised way of hiding the real reasons for the Government wanting the abolition of the national dock labour scheme. Ghosting and bobbing were practices that came about with the co-operation of the employers, because when ships were loading or discharging the employers demanded that the derricks were working and the hook was moving for the entire period for which that vessel was being loaded or discharged. The intense labour involved in loading and discharging vessels of cargoes, such as hides, beef and chemical cargoes, required men to take breaks from time to time. That system meant that the employer was maximising his labour to the absolute. The welting that went on in those days was necessary so that people could maintain the levels of production that the employer demanded.

It has been clear from the outset that the real reason for the Government wanting to abolish the national dock labour scheme—with the co-operation and collusion of employers who for the past 30 years have wanted to abolish it—is that they detest the trade union movement and the rights that workers have won through negotiations with the industries to which they belong. It is absurd for the party of privilege to refer to the dockers as privileged people. The Conservative party demands the retention of its power and privilege over the masses in this country; it has done so from the dawn of political history. Conservative Members should be the last to refer to dockers as privileged people and to raise that red or blue herring.

It is clear that the Bill is being railroaded through by the Government to remove as quickly as possible from the statute book all the present conditions in the dock industry. However, they have suggested nothing to put in their place.

I went on the Committee reluctantly. I believed that it was ritualistic to go on the Committee, because of the present Tory majority and its determination to abolish the scheme. No answers were given to questions raised by other members of the Committee. The Government now see fit to guillotine the Bill. One can argue that, in those circumstances, that Committee could be seen as a jury as appointed after the death sentence had been passed. The Secretary of State then hastily arranged for the execution by bringing in the guillotine.

Hon. Members talk of delay on clause 1, but clause 1 is in fact the Bill. The seven clauses that follow are consequential. Clause 1 abolishes the scheme. If clause 1 is the Bill, it is reasonable and proper that those Opposition Members who are opposing it should be given, first, the greatest opportunity to examine and probe the Government on the issues and, secondly, to discover what the Government intend to do about replacing the existing conditions as they apply to training, welfare, discipline and such other matters as are governed by the national dock labour scheme. So far, we have not been told.

Conservative Members have said that they are not prepared to respond to the suggestions of the Opposition on any matters. They have turned deaf ears to the forthright suggestions put to them, such as that a key industry cannot be left in a void. The docks are a key industry, and it appears that the Government are dealing with them in a cavalier fashion. Both in peace and war, the industry has played a key part in the creation of wealth in Britain. Indeed, when the second world war started, the main concern of Winston Churchill and Ernie Bevin was what would happen to the docks. Because of the pre-war conditions, the docks were in turmoil and chaos, and that situation continued into the post-war period. The state had to intervene to ensure that the ports were secure and that there was an understanding of the agreements under which the men were working. They made a major contribution to the war effort, and that was understood at that time.

I wonder what would happen in the unhappy event of a similar situation arising in the not-too-distant future. Would the Government leave the docks in the position that they will be in after the abolition of the scheme? Of course not. They would ensure that a similar scheme, if not the scheme itself, was in place to see that the whole of the docks industry was influenced by these disciplines.

There is no doubt in the minds of those serving on the Committee that the Government have not been prepared to listen to any of the arguments advanced about what will happen after the abolition of the scheme; nor have they shown any sign that they are worried about what will happen. It is obvious that the Government have been absolutely doctrinaire and dogmatic in taking this decision, which is why they will not move on the issue.

It is the height of hypocrisy by those who have spoken today to say that the number of hours spent on the Bill so far is an abuse of parliamentary democracy and Committee procedures. In all probability there is no precedent for a Bill being guillotined as this one will be. One can only put it down to the fact that the Government do not want to hear the case or listen to the questions being asked about the docks industry; the scheme ports and what will happen to them after the scheme is abolished.

There is utter confusion among dock workers about the outcome of the Bill and what will happen to their industry. Already, dock workers are leaving the industry en masse. This direct interference, based on pure political dogma, will create great difficulties in the port transport industry.

It has been evident from today's debate that Tory Members intend to get this legislation on the statute book without paying full regard to what is happening in the industry. To them, the scheme is the last bastion of trade union influence in this industry. They have made relentless attacks on the trade union movement since 1979 and they see this as the culmination of their attempts to take away the influence and power of trade unionism in the industry.

This is not the first or second time that attempts have been made to damage trade unionism. They go back to its birth, but it has survived and it will survive. The trade union movement will see through the Government as the public are now seeing through them. In the past four months we have seen ever greater criticisms of the Government's vindictiveness and inability or lack of desire to listen to anybody. Other sections of industry are becoming aware of what is going on.

There can be no justification whatever for the Government's actions. We should see the fullest possible debate in Committee and on the Floor of the House so that the Government answer our questions and the industry is not left in the mess in which they intend to leave it.

5.54 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Before I say why it is in the interests of my constituents to have this simple legislation passed as quickly as possible, I shall make a couple of points to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Janman: No, we are short of time.

In the mid and late 1970s, the Liberal party supported guillotine motions introduced by the Labour Government. I remind the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire that, during a debate on procedure in February 1986, his party voted for the guillotine to be applied to all Bills which spent more than 25 hours in Committee. I will give way to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) now, if he wishes.

Mr. Dobson: If the hon. Gentleman is so convinced that the abolition of the dock labour scheme appeals to his electors, why, last Thursday in the county council elections in Thurrock, did the Labour party win 56 per cent. and the Tory party 35 per cent. of the vote?

Mr. Janman: I shall bring two points to the hon. Gentleman's attention. First, in the ward of Tilbury and South Grays, the turnout dropped to 21 per cent. The Labour party had a much lower vote than it would normally expect. That was mainly due to the opposition of the Tilbury Labour party to the Royal Navy coming to the civil port of Tilbury. Many loyal Labour voters in that part of my constituency are beginning seriously to reconsider whether to continue voting for the Labour party.

Secondly, in 1981 the Labour party won all eight county seats in Thurrock and the Conservatives won the 1983 general election. In 1985, the Labour party won all eight county seats in Thurrock, and we went on to win the 1987 general election. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that, in 1989, the Conservatives gained a seat from the Labour party in the borough of Thurrock. Two thirds of the ward is in my constituency. We had an excellent turnout of our supporters and we gained a seat in the borough which has helped to re-establish overall Conservative control in Essex. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Labour party doing worse in the 1989 county elections in my constituency is pertinent to its doing better in the next general election than in the past two, I am at a complete loss to understand how he can justify his logic and analysis.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps we can get back to the motion.

Mr. Janman: I shall save the hon. Gentleman further embarrassment, Madam Deputy Speaker; that would be a good idea.

Since the proposed abolition of the scheme, a large number of companies have already started to contact the chief executive of the port of Tilbury and are showing great interest in coming to Tilbury to carry out many different types of process work. They have long been prevented from coming to Tilbury because of the dock labour scheme. It is extremely frustrating that the Opposition are filibustering on the Bill and making inordinately long and tedious speeches, because every day that the Bill is delayed, masses of new jobs that will be created in my constituency are being further delayed.

Opposition Members have said that it has taken the Government 10 years to introduce the Bill. I remind them that it has taken the Labour party 10 years to produce its policy review. Once the scheme is abolished and it is clear that the dock industry is free of it, the results will be much more positive for the docks, although it has taken us 10 years to introduce the Bill, than the results of the Labour party policy review, although it too has taken 10 years to produce.

This is only an eight-clause Bill. The Committee has been sitting for 29 hours. Even of one subtracts the small amount of time that we have taken off for bio-breaks and something to eat, we have been debating the Bill for 27 hours 33 minutes. That means that an average of more than three hours has been spent on each clause.

As I said, in terms of parliamentary perspective, the Bill is simple and short, and there is certainly no need for it to stay in Committee any longer than 1 pm on 18 May. It seems perfectly reasonable and justifiable to bring debate to a close in that period. We will have plenty of time in which to debate all eight clauses fully, to examine the Bill in detail and for the Committee to report back to the House. I am pleased to be able to support the Government's timetable motion.

6.1 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): It is good to listen to a valedictory from the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman); the county council elections last week showed that he is firmly headed for oblivion.

It is customary for Oppositions, whose job it is to oppose, to condemn the use of the guillotine as an unwarranted restriction on parliamentary debate. However, I submit to the House that on this occasion, the violation of parliamentary prerogative is out of all proportion to previous use of this procedure.

My research discloses that the Government have guillotined at least 25 Bills in the past 10 years. Excluding Bills debated in Committee of the whole House, which are special, the average time a Bill spent in Committee before the guillotine was used was no less than 83 hours. That time ranges between 115 hours and 44 hours. The number of Committee hours spent on the Dock Work Bill, as the Leader of the House said, was 29 hours, which is scarcely more than one third of the previous average during the past 10 years. That is why the Opposition are so angry. We do not want to make a merely ritualistic demand but, as the Leader of the House was forced to admit, the Government have set a new precedent, for which there are good reasons.

As far as I can discover, there is no precedent for anywhere near so brief a Committee stage before the imposition of a guillotine. The Government have been forced into using artificial devices to bring the number of hours even to 29. We are entitled to ask why the Government, having clearly decided by the beginning of last week to impose a guillotine, forced the Committee and my hon. Friends to sit into the night last Tuesday until 4.5 am on Wednesday, as *Hansard* records. Having already decided to use the guillotine, why was there a sittings motion on that day alone of almost 12 hours? There is a pretty obvious answer to that question.

The Government clearly wanted to provide a figleaf, however threadbare, for the guillotine that they had already decided to impose. That is not their first abuse of Parliament during the passage of the Bill. The Government have treated the House with contempt at every stage of the handling of the Bill. They produced a White Paper without any consultation and contrary to repeated assurances that we had from Ministers, including the Prime Minister, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) so strongly pointed out in a passage to which he did not receive a reply. The Bill was published the very next day. The Second Reading debate was held on the first permitted day thereafter. The Bill was sent to Committee after only eight days, instead of the usual fortnight, and an afternoon sittings motion was moved by the Minister immediately at the start of the first day in Committee, which is, I believe, without precedent for so short a Bill. Now, to cap it all, a guillotine has been imposed after the Bill has been in Committee for a uniquely brief time. After such a catalogue, all I can say is that the longer the Government are in office, the more arrogant they become day by day.

The indecent haste that the Government have displayed over this Bill can be illustrated by comparison with their treatment of their Pilotage Bill which began its journey through the House five years ago. It was not dissimilar to the Dock Work Bill. It involved 1,300 marine pilots and deregulated pilotage. A Green Paper was produced in 1984 and a White Paper in 1985. The Bill went through Parliament in 1986 and 1987 and a day was appointed for its implementation on 1 October 1988. Therefore, we are entitled to ask why the Government allowed four years for the Pilotage Bill but insistently demand that the Dock Work Bill should be in Committee for only four weeks. That is a relevant question, to which we have never received an answer.

I shall suggest an answer. The reason for the Government railroading the Bill headlong through the House with an arrogant contempt for Parliament—an arrogance matched only by the contempt for the Government shown by the electorate last week—was made clear by the Tory newspaper which sometimes has access to inside information, *The Daily Telegraph*. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman reads that newspaper, and he may have read the issue of 13 April in which it said:

"Dock employers who use outside workers to break a strike against the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme could risk court action and possibly jail, it emerged last night. Ministers have been alerted to a legal trap facing employers wishing to keep the 40 scheme ports running.

Until the Bill scrapping the 52-year-old scheme is on the statute book later this year, it will remain illegal to employ non-registered dockers in ports maintained by the Dock Labour Boards.

At present, if an employer taken on non-registered workers without the approval of the local Dock Labour Board he is liable to prosecution and imprisonment for up to three months, or a fine or both.

The threat of legal action . . . is likely to dissuade employers from bringing in non-registered workers."

This is the point:

"It has also convinced Ministers that the Bill should go through Parliament swiftly."

There we have it. The guillotine has nothing to do with parliamentary niceties.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): It is a scandal.

Mr. Meacher: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, who has just bowled in in his customary fashion, thinks that it is a scandal; so do we, but for more serious reasons. The guillotine has nothing to do with the niceties of Parliament, about which the Government care not a fig. The Bill is being driven through the House at unprecedented speed because it is a strike-breaking measure in the event of a strike. That is the real, unspoken reason why the Government are ready to breach all previous parliamentary rules and why they turned the Committee stage into such a farce, in which amendments were not even being seriously considered.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman used that extract in Committee, but he cannot have it both ways. He cannot accuse the Government of trying to engineer a strike and at the same time engineering a method of overcoming a strike if it happens. Will the hon. Gentleman please clarify his position?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman is extremely naive if he thinks that the Government are incapable of doing both. Many people are suspicious that they are doing just that. The Government have adopted a cynical posture. The Secretary of State says, for public consumption, that the Government will not become involved in the current trade dispute, and that negotiation is purely a matter for the local employers. However, at the same time, behind the scenes, the Government break every rule in the parliamentary book in order to abolish the scheme as fast as possible to hand the employers the most potent strike-breaking weapon to use if industrial action occurs.

The trouble with the Government is that they are far more interested in precipitating a strike and then making political capital out of it, as a distraction from their mounting economic and political difficulties, than they are in trying to prevent a strike in the first place. They are uniquely in a position to prevent one if they choose to make a real effort to do so. That is why the Secretary of State keeps intoning in committee that the abolition of the scheme is a matter for the Government and that the role of Parliament must not be usurped, yet he refuses point blank, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) so eloquently pointed out, to negotiate on what might follow the scheme, saying that that is a matter for the employers. When the Transport and General Workers union tries to negotiate with the employers, it is told that this is all a political matter for the Government. If the Government would only put half the energy into negotiating to prevent a strike that they are putting into provoking one by adamantly refusing to negotiate, Britain could be saved a dangerous, lengthy and damaging strike which no one except the Government wants.

The Secretary of State's assurances do not carry much credibility when he forecasts a smooth transition to local collective bargaining in which employers will respect employee rights and local trade union bargaining. That was the story that the Minister repeatedly put across in Committee. A letter from one local employer sent out on 27 April from Mersey Container Terminals Ltd. gives the lie to these claims by the right hon. Gentleman:

"If after a ballot has been held and by a majority of strikers called some of the men go on strike and some stay in work those men on strike would be dismissed for breach of contract . . . if once again a strike has been called and all men go on strike they will all be dismissed for breach of contract."

[Mr. Meacher]

That lets the cat out of the bag. It means that, under the new regime, there will be no right to strike or to withdraw labour. So much for the preservation of basic employee rights.

This same employer goes on to set out an 18-item employment contract which each worker is required to sign and return to the employer. So in future, there will be no collective bargaining—so much for all the smooth talk about a natural return to normal trade union bargaining rights. This shows clearly what abolition of the dock labour scheme is all about.

Abolition is not about efficiency. A recent study states:

"A crude measure of efficiency, the tonnage moved per docker per year, reveals an even result between both scheme and non-scheme ports. For 1987, the last year that complete figures were available, each scheme docker moved 13,346 tonnes of cargo, compared with 13,655 per docker in non-port schemes".

So by that efficiency measure, there is no difference between scheme and non-scheme ports.

Abolition is not about productivity. The scheme ports have had a productivity gain of no less than 720 per cent. over the past 20 years. That is an indisputable fact, and it is a record almost unmatched in British industry.

Abolition is not even about profits. Associated British Ports, the largest port employer, returned profits last year 22 per cent. up—£46 million; its dividends were up by 33 per cent. and the chairman's salary went up a miserable 22 per cent. to a mere £119,000 per year. Abolition is all about power, the ending of joint determination, and the reassertion of the unilateral prerogative of the employers to hire and fire at will.

I end by quoting the words of a Tilbury docker, who expresses this much more clearly than anyone here could:

"The say we have in our industry is the say that every working man should have in his industry. We have it and they are trying to take it away from us. Doing away with the scheme has nothing to do with port efficiency. It is purely political. Under the national dock labour scheme we have an input into how our industry is run, something that is totally foreign to this current Government's way of thinking. No working man should have a say in how his industry is run —that is what they think and that is really what it is all about. It has got nothing to do with efficiency; it is all to do with dogma."

It is because this Bill is about political dogma, not economic efficiency, and about strike breaking, not the national interest, that we utterly reject this unprecedented, partisan and self-serving use of the guillotine.

6.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): It must be pointed out first that, as my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) said, after 30 hours debate in Committee we are only part way through clause 1. At that rate of progress we shall be in Committee until 1990. This motion will make it possible to hold a further 30 hours of debate, making a total of 60 hours for an eight-clause Bill.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) incorrectly referred to a lack of precedents. There are precedents, and I think he knows them——

Mr. Meacher: Name one.

Mr. Fowler: My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House named two: the Town and Country Planning Bill of 1946-47 was introduced by a Labour Government, and the Social Security (No. 2) Bill of 1979-80 was introduced by this Government.

The flavour of the Committee proceedings can be sampled by reflecting on the conduct of the Opposition whip. Whips are traditionally the silent men of Westminster. In this case, the Opposition Whip has been warned nine times from the Chair for tedious repetition.

There have been lengthy contributions by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). Looking around the Committee Room, he said how nice it was, after Sky Television, to have such a big audience. I do not object to that. The trouble is that it went entirely to his head and led to a speech of more than two hours.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: If my hon. Friend will allow me, no.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby has frankly admitted that his intention has been to delay. I am not saying that we have not learnt from the Opposition in Committee. Sometimes we have not learnt much about the dock labour scheme, but we have learnt about a whole range of other matters—the after-hours activities of television crews visiting Rotterdam, the printing of Chiang Kai Shek's banknotes, employee relations in the Japanese mushroom-growing industry and the frustrated ambitions of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

To this gallery we have now added the shadow Leader of the House, who predicts that there will be a return to casual work. We have heard the hon. Gentleman's predictions about transport before. When I denationalised the National Freight Corporation, he predicted that no one would want the shares, and certainly not people working for the company. That became the most famous employee shareholding scheme of all time. The hon. Gentleman's predictions have about as much authority as those of the weathermen before the great storm of 1987.

Mr. Dobson: If the right hon. Gentleman is so confident that there will be no return to casual working, why will he not insist that the employers guarantee that in negotiations with the union? Why will he not give the assurance statutory backing so that, if the employers turn out to be lying, a law will be in place to offer dockers the protection they ask for?

Mr. Fowler: We are moving away from a statutory scheme. I should have thought that virtually every commentator in this country accepts that the undertakings given by the employers about no return to casualism take the position a great deal further than it has ever been before. The Opposition should accept that, too.

Mr. Meacher: If that is the case, why was it that in 1970, when employers gave exactly the same commitment, within 18 months we were back to casualisation in quite a major fashion?

Mr. Fowler: Opposition Members need only look at the position in the non-scheme ports—there is no need to look into the crystal ball—where trade and employment have increased and there has been no return to casual labour. It is about time that Labour Members accepted that.

The suggestion of the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, that we had planned the debate for today because there might be a tube strike must rank as one of the silliest suggestions ever heard in the House, even from the current occupants of the Opposition Front Bench.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) raised a number of points. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said, we need not be prepared to take lectures from him, considering that he introduced five guillotine motions in one day.

The right hon. Gentleman particularly asked about the view of Lord Aldington. We have that on record, in response to the statement made in the other place. The noble Lord said at that stage that he was wholly in agreement with the line that had been announced. In short—I paraphrase his remarks—he said that he was delighted that a scheme based on entirely different conditions, not there today, which involved damaging casual labour, not there today, would be ended and that all the ports would be put on level pegging. That position of the noble Lord adds authority and support to the case that we are putting.

Several hon. Members referred to the position of people in the industry from the point of view of consultation. The positions of those involved have been irreconcilable. The Transport and General Workers Union has stated repeatedly its attachment to the fundamentals of the scheme and has regularly threatened national strikes in the event of any suggestion that the scheme's damaging restrictions should be reduced. The union has refused five approaches from the employers to consider voluntary arrangements to replace the scheme.

When the then Secretary of State for Transport, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, invited the unions and employers to discuss voluntary arrangements to replace the scheme in 1986, the national secretary of the TGWU docks group, Mr. Connolly, replied:

"Having in mind our position that the Dock Labour Scheme is to remain, I see no point in joint discussions to provide for arrangements which might follow its removal."

In 1987 he repeated that by saying:

"The policy of the Docks and Waterways Group has not changed. There will be opposition to the amendment or revision of the scheme, and that opposition will take the form of a national docks strike."

It is significant, that in the debate in Committee and indeed in the debate outside, little attempt has been made to defend the dock labour scheme. When it has been defended, that has been done on arguments that applied to a position 40 or 50 years ago. The debate is now establishing that, in the context of the 1980s and 1990s, the dock labour scheme cannot be defended.

It is impossible to defend a statutory monopoly which makes it a criminal offence to employ other than registered dock workers in many of the ports of this country. It is impossible to defend a scheme which acts as a disincentive to investment, not only in scheme ports but in the areas around the ports. It is impossible to defend a scheme which, in spite of all its restrictions and regulations, has seen employment fall and trade disappear to non-scheme ports and to ports on the continent.

In the final analysis, the dock labour scheme is against the interests of the ports, against the interests of the areas adjoining the ports and against the interests of those working in the ports industry. In particular this is the case when the employers have given the clearest assurances that there will be no return to casual working.

The Government put the case for the Bill in the White Paper and in the Second Reading debate, when abolition had a majority of over 100. The time has come for decision. Prevarication and delay can be in nobody's interest. In particular it can be in nobody's interest when registered dockers are being balloted on strike action. Against that background also, there can be no case for uncertainty about what Parliament intends.

Whatever may be the view of the Opposition on strike action—we still await a statement from the hon. Member for Oldham, West on industrial action and his response to it—we do not believe that a strike can be justified. A strike can only harm the scheme ports and ultimately the work force taking the action. More than that, it cannot be justified because the right place for the decision to be taken on a statutory scheme is in Parliament. That is particularly the case remembering that the hon. Member for Oldham, West put forward in Committee the case for a new statutory dock labour scheme. He made the position of the Opposition clear when he said twice in Committee:

"we believe in a regulated dock work industry rather than moving towards either national or local collective bargaining."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 27 April 1989; c. 40.]

Thus, the Labour party is committed to a new statutory dock labour scheme. In those circumstances, a strike would be entirely unjustified. Whether there should be a statutory scheme should be decided by Parliament, not on the picket line.

We look forward to that political debate. It will be important because, according to amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, he wants not just a new statutory scheme but a scheme which includes provisions from the 1976 legislation and which were rejected by the House when the Labour party was in office.

The effect of the hon. Gentleman's amendments would be to extend the scheme to new occupations such as warehousing, packing and unpacking containers, and to new areas within half a mile of any harbour area. So the hon. Gentleman, not content with taking us back to the 1970s in industrial relations, and not content with his plans to legalise the secondary picket, now plans to go back to the mid-1970s for his dock work scheme.

We believe that the case for abolition is overwhelming. Whatever may have been the position at the time of the second world war, the restrictions of the scheme are not relevant to the needs of the ports industry today. Even less do they match up to the challenges that British ports will face in the 1990s. *[Interruption.]* It is a pity that the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who leads temporarily for the Opposition, is not even prepared to listen to the argument on this issue.

We want to ensure a good future for our ports and for those working in them. But that future will not be assured by the antiquated restrictions of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: No, I will not give way.

I do not doubt the sincerity of Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), but I must tell him and those who put forward similar arguments that they are fighting yesterday's battle on dock work. If they doubt that, they need only look at

[Mr. Fowler]

the experience of the ports outside the scheme, where trade has expanded, employment has grown and nobody has seriously claimed that that progress has been achieved by the exploitation of the dockers in those ports.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: No, I have only two minutes left, and the hon. Gentleman has spent five minutes talking to his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: No.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fowler: Pay, hours and working conditions in the non-scheme ports are negotiated by the Transport and General Workers Union, the same union which conducts the negotiations in the scheme ports. Every assurance has been given that there will be no return to casual working. It is not revolutionary to suggest that dockers should move up to the position occupied by virtually every other worker in this country.

It is now in nobody's interest that there should be delay. Without the restrictions, the scheme ports will be able to compete better. Our proposals are for the benefit of the ports industry, the work force and for the inner city areas around the ports.

We know what has happened in the non-scheme ports —we have seen the development of trade and of employment. That is in stark contrast to everything that has happened in the scheme ports. That is why we believe that the dock labour scheme should be abolished. The motion provides ample time for a full debate on the remainder of a short Bill. The time has come for decision and it is for Parliament to decide the issue. The decision should be taken in Parliament and not on the picket lines that the Labour party is so enthusiastic to reinstate.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 245, Noes 170.

Division No. 188] **[6.30 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Portillo, Michael
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*

Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1. The proceedings on the Bill in the Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall be brought to a conclusion at or before 1 p.m. on 18th May 1989, and the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on or before that day.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in one allotted day and shall be brought to a conclusion at midnight on that day; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on consideration such part of that day as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the third day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusions of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On an allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment is moved or Motion is made by a member of the Government;

(d) and other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If the allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Reccommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, reccommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Dock Work Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Smoking in Public Places

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer to the procedure under which we shall debate the motion. The motion is much more fundamental and important than may at first seem apparent, because it represents a significant change in Government policy.

The motion announces that, on all Euro-nanny smoking matters, the Government now intend suddenly to fall back on a most welcome voluntary approach, and to declare that such matters are no longer within the competence of the EEC.

On 14 November 1988, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—my hon. Friend the Minister's predecessor as Under-Secretary of State for Health—introduced an EEC directive on tobacco products whose intention was to relabel all tobacco cartons in this country, on the ground that it was a thoroughly good thing that the EEC should attempt to reduce people's smoking activities and to stop them smoking. So from compulsion on 14 November we have moved to voluntarism on 8 March.

That change is welcome, but I understand that the House has only 15 minutes to debate the motion before the procedural axe falls. I think that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health should come to the House to explain the difference between the policy of 14 November and that being adopted today and also to make it clear that something of considerable significance is occurring in our relations with the EEC.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Although the procedural axe will fall at 7 o'clock, we shall return to the motion after private business has been dealt with. The hon. Gentleman's other points can be raised during the debate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a proposal before the House from the EEC in the name of Lord Cockfield, its former Commissioner, stating that the Government should, to conform with the Single European Act, reduce cigarette tax. The motion now before the House aims at reducing smoking, but according to the Department of Health, the EEC proposals would, because of reduced taxation, serve to increase it. My understanding of parliamentary rules is that the House cannot consider conflicting proposals. I wonder whether that rule applies also to the EEC proposal instructing the Government to reduce taxation on cigarettes. Do the restrictions placed on normal parliamentary debate apply to EEC proposals?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Nothing in the motion before the House is against parliamentary rules. If the hon. Gentleman wants to pursue his line of argument, he should do so in debate, after the motion has been moved.

6.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4225/89 and Corrigendum on banning smoking in public places; recognises that if agreed it would allow the Government to continue its current successful policy of achieving progress in this area largely through voluntary rather than legislative means; and endorses the Government's objective of replacing the draft Recommendation with a mixed Resolution or Recommendation, which would recognise Member States' doubts about Community competence in this area.

Smoking is the largest single preventable cause of death in the United Kingdom today. Ninety per cent. of all lung cancer deaths, 20 per cent. of all deaths due to coronary heart disease and 90 per cent. of all deaths caused by bronchitis are associated with smoking. Smoking during pregnancy may now be the single most important cause of late foetal death and leads to reduced birth weight and increased perinatal mortality. It is likely that giving up smoking is the single most important thing that smokers can do to improve their health. The Government actively discourage smoking and have an extensive public education programme run by the Health Education Authority.

Most smokers take up regular smoking before the age of 18, and it has been estimated that of the 250 million children and teenagers now living in the European region of the World Health Organisation between 30 and 40 million will be killed in later life by tobacco. It is obviously crucial to reach young people of school age and help them to resist the pressure to start smoking. In January the Prime Minister launched a three-year campaign to reduce the prevalence of smoking among teenagers. This campaign will be run jointly by the Health Education Authority and the Department of Health and will cost the Department £2 milion each year for the next three years. The campaign will use the mass media—including TV, radio and magazines—to influence teenage children, and it will also seek the support of a wide range of national and local organisations, including schools, local education authorities, health authorities, Action on Smoking and Health and leading health charities.

This debate gives members a valuable opportunity to consider the draft EC recommendation on smoking in public places which will come to the Council of Ministers on 16 May. The purpose of the recommendation is to exhort member states to make progress in providing smoke-free areas in enclosed premises to which the public have access. The Government wholeheartedly support that aim. Our approach of encouraging the provision of smoke-free areas has met with a good deal of success, and I would very much like that to continue. However, it is very important that we do not allow the Commission to use the recommendation as a means to extend its competence. That is why, as I will explain shortly, the United Kingdom has proposed that we should replace the recommendation with a mixed resolution. I shall describe what is meant by that in a moment.

Mr. Aitken: As my hon. Friend is dealing with the issue of extending the competence of the EC, will he now deal with the point that I raised in my point of order a few moments ago? Her Majesty's Government were all in favour of extending that competence to deal with compulsory anti-smoking directives a few months ago. Why has there been a complete change of heart tonight? Why are the Government now in favour only of the voluntary approach to curbing excessive smoking?

I know that occupants of my hon. Friend's office seem to have a rather high casualty rate nowadays, so I advise him to choose his words carefully. Nevertheless, the ambivalence needs to be clarified.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will

[Mr. Freeman]

be able to amplify his point, but I shall try to address it in the few remarks that I intend to make in opening the debate. If I am able—with your permission—to reply at the end, I may expand on them then.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): *rose——*

Mr. Freeman: I should like to make progress.

Mr. Marlow: If I intervene at this stage, I dare say that my hon. Friend will be able to make even swifter progress.

My hon. Friend is concerned about the competence of the Community with regard to this issue, as, I am sure, are most right hon. and hon. Members. My hon. Friend is aware of the existence of the scrap of paper called the Single European Act, which states that the Community —I presume that that includes my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—was

"Moved by the will . . . to transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union".

If my right hon. Friend has signed a treaty to move us towards European union, does that not mean that this measure is a proper measure to be decided at European level, and that therefore Europe should have competence? How can my hon. Friend say that Europe does not have competence when our right hon. Friend has signed this turbid and unpleasant document?

Mr. Freeman: First, we argue that the changes made by the European Commission in the text of the document that we have before us are acceptable, in the sense that the document does not recommend legislation but would enable Her Majesty's Government to continue with their programme of encouraging individuals, authorities and other bodies to operate a voluntary code limiting or banning smoking in certain parts of public places. Secondly, we argue that under the treaty the Commission has no power in public health matters. I hope that I have made that crystal clear.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I appreciate my hon. Friend's courtesy in giving way. One thing that we would love to know is what the Government can do if they take the view that the measure is beyond the competence of the EC, but the majority of Ministers decide to approve it. Is there anything that we can do to stop it from coming into effect? Some of us are very worried about that. Have we any powers to stop it unless we can persuade all the member states unanimously that the EC is not competent?

Mr. Freeman: A unanimous decision is required. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If my hon. Friends will permit me to develop my remarks, I shall demonstrate that a mixed resolution or recommendation combines the elements of a matter within the general competence of the Council and those of a decision reached by the various Ministers present, outside the treaty of Rome, if they believe that it is in the interests of all the nations involved. I shall be arguing that in the case of public health matters, which are separate from environmental matters, the writ of the treaty does not run, and we resist the general priciple that the Commission should seek to extend its powers in this regard.

It may be helpful if I set out some of the background. There has been much concern in recent years about the risks of "secondary" or "passive" smoking, and that is the underlying motivation behind the recommendation. The Government accept the findings of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health, which concluded that there was a 10 per cent. to 30 per cent. increased risk of lung cancer for non-smokers who are habitually exposed to tobacco smoke. That could account for several hundred deaths each year. There is also a risk of increased respiratory disease in children, and in pregnant women the development of the foetus may be damaged. Tobacco smoke can also cause considerable irritation to the eyes and throat.

Public awareness about the risks of passive smoking has increased public demand for the provision of smoke-free areas. Generally, smokers and non-smokers alike consider it right that smoke-free areas should, if at all possible, be available in public places. The Government actively encourage the implementation of smoking policies and welcome the increasing introduction of smoke-free zones in public places such as cinemas, shops, restaurants and public transport.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Why, then, have the Government done nothing to introduce no-smoking areas in pubs? Is the Minister aware that the House approved my ten-minute Bill providing that there should be non-smoking areas in pubs, yet the previous Health Minister—the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—actively resisted any demand for action? Why are pubs the one area in which the Government refuse to try to enforce such a requirement?

Mr. Freeman: We argue that in the case of restaurants, pubs and aeroplanes—the hon. Gentleman will remember a recent debate in the House on banning smoking in aeroplanes—it is for the publican, the restaurateur, the airline or whatever authority is involved to decide. The hon. Gentleman will know that there is already legislation relating to transport: London Underground has banned smoking, which it is able to do under its byelaws—not, I should add, for reasons of public health, but for reasons of public safety. There is a considerable difference between legislation to protect the public safety and legislation to protect the public health.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My hon. Friend has outlined the dangers of passive smoking. On what evidence does he make his statement? Does it come from his Department, or can it be hearsay?

Mr. Freeman: I was hoping to come to that point shortly, but I shall deal with it directly to help my hon. Friend. We believe that passive smoking—that is, the inhalation of the cigarette smoke of others in public and, indeed, private places—leads to several hundred deaths a year. We believe that the incidence and possible incidence of cancer, particularly lung cancer, is increased, especially for those who are regularly exposed to smoking by others. That is not the conclusion of Ministers or other politicians; it is based on the advice of the chief medical officer.

We believe that in general voluntary policies are the best way to proceed, because such policies—being produced in response to consumer or employee demand —will cater for the needs of both smokers and non-smokers, and can be tailored more easily to individual areas and workplaces. We believe that such voluntary and

local action is preferable to a national legislated ban. As I have said before, where banning smoking is necessary for safety or hygiene we have not hesitated to introduce legislation, and under existing legislation London Underground has banned smoking for safety reasons.

The EC draft recommendation that we are considering tonight originates from the Europe Against Cancer action plan. Hon. Members may have seen the proposal as originally put forward by the Commission. The explanatory memorandum describes the amendments that have been made to the original proposal. As it now stands, the draft recommendation calls on member states to work towards a ban on smoking in enclosed premises open to the public and on public transport. This may be done through legislation or by other means, including voluntary means, which is the approach adopted by Her Majesty's Government.

The recommendation also calls for clearly defined areas to be set aside for smokers both in enclosed public places and on public transport—especially where long journeys might be involved. The recommendation is based on the treaty of Rome as a whole, not on any one article, which means that unaminity among member states is required if the measure is to be adopted.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend said earlier that the European Community does not have competence with regard to——

It being Seven o'clock, and there being private business set down by direction of THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS, *under Standing Order No. 16 (Time for taking private business), further proceeding stood postponed.*

King's Cross Railways Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to inform the House that Mr. Speaker has not accepted the instruction standing in the name of the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). However, he has selected the other two instructions and it will be for the convenience of the House to debate them together, with the motion for Second Reading.

7 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill gives powers to British Rail to carry out certain works at King's Cross, and I will describe them briefly in a moment, but the House will want to put these rather technical details in a broader context and see how the new King's Cross, made possible by the Bill, fits in with transport, planning and regional policies.

I hope that all in the House will agree on three broad objectives. The first is the need to invest substantially in public transport, particularly in London, where the limitations of any policy relying too heavily on private transport are all too visible. I detect an impatience among Londoners, among those who commute to London and those who visit and use public transport in London about its quality and limitations. People want its capacity increased; they want it to be safer; and they want it to be more accessible and convenient to use. The Bill will help to achieve that objective by the improvements to the Underground, and by the improvement in the interchange between British Rail and London Regional Transport. Given constraints on public expenditure, and the understandable wish to keep fares down, if these improvements and increases in capacity can be funded in part from planning gain, so much the better.

That leads to the second objective. We all wish to bring back into use derelict land, particularly in our inner cities, where its misuse is least defensible. Unemployment in parts of inner London is still far too high and, with pressure on land elsewhere that has a high amenity value, the neglect of acres upon acres of unused land in the heart of the capital cannot be tolerated. The works in the Bill unlock the development potential of the land behind King's Cross. This capital surplus will be used by British Rail to pay for other works in a partnership between public and private sectors, which is now accepted by all parties as a sensible way to proceed. The development will also bring jobs to a part of London where they are still scarce. Some 30,000 jobs will be provided in the associated redevelopment of the area, and rightly so, because King's Cross is identified as a preferred office location in the Greater London development plan, subject to improvement of the public transport system. The Bill does that.

In the draft strategic planning guidance for London, the Secretary of State pointed out in March:

"there are likely to be development opportunities on large sites in London which were formerly required for public utilities or services, but which are no longer needed for these purposes."

King's Cross is just such a site. For 15 years, it has been identified by local authorities as an area of opportunity. The works in the Bill free the development land, planning

[Sir George Young]

permission for which is being sought in the normal way by the developer from the local authority. The opportunity is now here.

Thirdly, as our trade with Europe increases and links with markets there become more important, we must ensure that all regions of the country have access to those markets and the opportunity to share in the benefits. The Bill helps to achieve that objective by linking the British Rail network in the north with that in the south, and in a way that no other transport interchange ever could. Direct travel from Europe to the north becomes possible.

I should now like to relate the works in the Bill to the broader objectives that I have outlined. Much of the Bill improves public transport. Work No. 5 provides a connection between the east coast main line, and St. Pancras station. This will allow Network SouthEast trains from the Peterborough and Cambridge lines to run into St. Pancras station. At the moment, these trains end up in a separate suburban station to the west of King's Cross, some way from the Underground and the rest of the services in the terminal. Demand on these lines has been growing and, as there is spare capacity at St. Pancras, it makes sense to use it by providing this connection. Works Nos. 11A and 11B lengthen the platforms at St. Pancras to take 12-car trains and provide additional platforms to accommodate future growth.

On the same theme, works Nos. 1 to 7 and Nos. 10 to 15 in the London Regional Transport half of the schedule provide for the enlargement of the existing Underground ticket hall, which is already becoming very congested, and for new subways which will relieve pressure and provide additional access and escape routes. King's Cross-St. Pancras is one of the busiest and most complex Underground stations, handling some 80 million passengers a year, serving five Underground lines and two British Rail terminals. The provisions in the Bill cope with current congestion problems, and provide for future growth already projected, plus the additional traffic from the railway lands site and the improvements to British Rail services.

In addition, a new Underground ticket hall—the eastern ticket hall—will be built to serve the Thameslink platforms and the Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria lines. This replaces the present entrance in Pentonville road, at a more convenient location and with quicker exits from the three tube lines. The additional subways proposed also provide a secondary exit from each of the Underground platforms—valuable in the case of emergency evacuation of the station. Work No. 13 links this new eastern ticket hall with the main Underground ticket hall.

The most important of the subway works provide direct connections between the Circle and Metropolitan line platforms, and the three deep tube lines—the Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria. At the moment, if one wants to change, one has to go through the already overcrowded ticket hall. This new subway connection will reduce traffic in the ticket hall by about 30 per cent., and implements recommendation 142 in the Fennell report.

Work No. 4 replaces the present unfriendly access to the Underground from St. Pancras down a narrow and tortuous subway with an enlarged and improved one.

The principal work in the Bill is a new British Rail station, beneath the existing King's Cross main line station. At its northern end, the tracks divide to join both the east coast main line and the midland main line. At the south end, the tracks connect with Thameslink and, at a future date, and if the House so decides, with the Channel Tunnel rail link.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): As the hon. Gentleman is the spokesman for the sponsors of the Bill, perhaps I should mention to him that I have received a communication from a body known as the Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales. It consists of four major county councils: Gwent, Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. They complain that none of the proposals provides for any link between the western region InterCity service operating from Paddington to south Wales and the proposed new terminal at King's Cross. They say that if they are to benefit from the Channel tunnel traffic, such a link is absolutely essential. Does the hon. Gentleman have anything to say about that point?

Sir George Young: I agree that it will be important to ensure that people in south Wales have access to the Channel tunnel terminal and, through that, access to Europe. Whether it makes sense to provide that access at King's Cross and, therefore, through the Bill, I am not sure, but I shall pass on to British Rail the hon. Gentleman's valuable point in order to make sure that south Wales benefits from the links with Europe.

A new station is needed anyway. The existing Thameslink station is already inadequate. The platforms were originally designed for the local service from Moorgate to Bedford, before Thameslink was conceived. With this popular cross-London line now in operation, the platforms—particularly northbound—are very crowded, and they cannot be widened because they are up against the Circle line. The only way to cope with extra demand is to relocate the station, which provides the opportunity to bring it closer to the main line platforms, thereby improving interchange and making it accessible to people with disabilities.

At the moment, Thameslink reaches only the Bedford line to the north. The proposed connection links it to the east coast main line as well. This opens up a wealth of opportunities, such as trains from Peterborough to Gatwick, Cambridge to Sevenoaks, and so on.

Next to the new Thameslink platforms, again beneath King's Cross main line, are the international platforms, and it is this part of the Bill which has generated some controversy. Why another international station, and why King's Cross?

All the forecasts show that existing capacity at Waterloo, the other international terminal that is due to open in 1996, will not be able to cope with expected traffic beyond the turn of the century. Putting aside the strong arguments for a terminal at King's Cross in its own right, we need to develop more capacity to cope with rail-based traffic to and from Europe.

King's Cross is uniquely well served by other British Rail and Underground lines, as well as being easily accessible by bus and taxi. That convenience of interchange and access to public transport puts it way ahead of other rivals—notably Stratford—in its convenience for customers. In particular, it is the best calling point on the way to the north, allowing a passenger to get off a train from Paris to Newcastle and get on one from

Brussels to Manchester. Further, it offers international passengers easy interchange to Inter-City services to the rest of the country and to Network SouthEast services to locations closer to London. That ability to integrate the international services with the existing British Rail network simply does not exist at any other main line terminal, let alone some of the other options that have been canvassed.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): If all this is true, when the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 and the location of the first terminal at Waterloo were being considered, why did counsel for British Rail say that King's Cross was unsuitable because of overcrowding of tube lines and above-ground links?

Sir George Young: As I have explained, other provisions of the Bill increase capacity at King's Cross. Underground capacity is being increased by other parts of the Bill. At that stage, forecasts were much lower, and it was thought that Waterloo would suffice. Forecasts have been revised and it is no longer suitable to rely only on Waterloo as the other terminal.

Mr. Dobson: Counsel for British Rail also asserted that the roads around King's Cross were far too crowded and could not cope with additional traffic. They are more crowded now than when he said that.

Sir George Young: The philosophy behind King's Cross is its access by public transport, which puts it way ahead of all the other possible interchanges. Compared with the car, which is the form of transport that would have to be used for some of the other options, King's Cross is unrivalled in its access to public transport.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Before the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) intervened, my hon. Friend said that two or three major cities in the north will have through trains from the continent. My hon. Friend did not mention Britain's second biggest city—Birmingham. Will he comment on the scope for through trains from the continent to Birmingham?

Sir George Young: The Bill does not preclude other links, such as those to the west coast main line. If British Rail decides to develop other links, legislation will be brought forward at the appropriate time.

While the Bill makes provision for the second international terminal to be at King's Cross, it does not prejudge the exact line of route of the link to it from the Channel tunnel. The chosen route will be the subject of a separate Bill. As I have said, the Bill also does not preclude a passenger link to the west coast main line.

The reason why provision for the international terminal needs to be made in the Bill is that the construction works for it need to be integrated with the other works to which I have referred. The additional Thameslink capacity is required now, and British Rail wants to present all the proposals for King's Cross together.

The platforms on the proposed international station will take 16-coach trains and two power cars. Those platforms, which will be below ground, will be linked by subways to the new terminal building, the main line platforms and the Underground. Provision is also being made for security staff, Customs and immigration and police.

The new terminal building will be located between King's Cross and St. Pancras. It will serve both stations and replace the unattractive structure in front of King's Cross, planning consent for which expires in 1993. The new concourse will have access to both main line stations, the international and Thameslink platforms and the Underground ticket hall.

I know that local Members of Parliament are concerned about the impact of traffic on their constituencies. We have already heard some interventions expressing such concern. I hope that I have made it clear that the philosophy behind the Bill is to encourage access by public transport. It is hoped that people travelling north from Europe will not travel to King's Cross by taxi from Waterloo, but board a train at Paris that travels to King's Cross.

Improvements are planned for the road network, especially better access by bus. At the moment, one is tipped out in a nearby road and makes one's way to the station. There will be proper access to the station by bus and improvements to the road network at the junctions of Caledonian road, Pentonville road and King's Cross road, which is wholly inadequate at the moment and for which improvements have been planned for 15 years.

As sponsor of the Bill, I have taken a special interest in Camley street natural park, about which I have received many letters. In the five years since it started, the park, which is ably run by the London Wildlife Trust, has become a popular destination for Londoners interested in its nature reserve. The location of the international terminal, and the connections between the east coast and midland lines, require its relocation during construction and its reinstatement on a larger site thereafter.

Together with the developers of the railway lands and London Wildlife Trust, British Rail has identified a larger area for the park to be re-established within the new development. Every assistance will be given to the trust to continue its work during construction and to restock the park when established on its permanent site on completion. I have no doubt that it will then be better placed to continue its valuable educational role within an enhanced and enlarged natural park.

The Bill offers the opportunity to improve the appearance of this part of London and to turn King's Cross and St. Pancras into not only Europe's largest transport interchange but an attractive set of buildings of which Londoners can be proud. One cannot see the front of King's Cross at present because of the temporary structure in front of it. Once removed, the train sheds, which are grade 1 listed buildings, will be visible again in all their glory. Between them and the Midland hotel will be the new terminal building, which had been designed to the highest architectural standards to match its neighbours. The new vista will be incomparably better than the muddle that we have at present.

I have outlined the provisions of the Bill and put them in a broader context. If time permits and the House allows it, I shall be happy to deal with points made in the debate. Of course, achieving the objectives that I have outlined involves disruption, inconvenience and disappointment for some local people and businesses. I do not disguise that fact, and local Members of Parliament are right to fight for those whom they represent. Changes have been made, further consultation is planned, some have petitioned against the Bill and the Committee will hear them. I have no doubt that Parliament should endorse the strategy behind the Bill, which is to enhance the role of King's

[Sir George Young]

Cross in our nation's public transport network, to build stronger links between Scotland, the north, the midlands and Europe and to improve the Underground in the light of the Fennell report.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving details at this stage, which is helpful. He mentioned the importance of public transport and through trains from the continent to the north. Is he aware that British Rail has stated that its policy is to try to concentrate international trains from London to the continent because it is more economic to do so and to get people to change in London? Can he give any undertakings that that policy will be changed to provide from King's Cross—I should prefer from Stratford—through trains to the north and Scotland, as so many of my hon. Friends reasonably want?

Sir George Young: I have no instructions, and I should not want British Rail to do anything that minimised the search for economy. If I can offer some comfort to the hon. Gentleman now or later, I shall try to do so.

The hon. Gentleman hit me in mid-peroration. I was saying that the House should support the Bill's objectives of improving the Underground in the light of the Fennell report, facilitating the regeneration of a rundown part of London and providing local employment.

I believe that this is the most exciting transport project to come before the House for a long time, and I hope that hon. Members give it their support.

7.18 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I must record my dismay at the way in which the private Bill procedure is being used to bring in the proposals for King's Cross. The Bill represents the piecemeal approach to major transport and development planning, which should be the province of far more sensible and democratic procedures than those available under the private Bill process. The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir George Young) the promoter of the Bill, who normally says far more sensible things in the House, said that the Bill did not preclude a passenger link to services to the north-west. Neither he nor British Rail has told us whether there will be a passenger rail link to services to the north-west. It is precisely because we have a Bill in isolation which deals simply and solely with the station, not with the routes to or from that station, that we cannot consider many of the ramifications of the Bill in relation to services to and from the station. That creates an enormous difficulty when we try to address the plans and transport issues properly.

The private Bill procedure—and we know from our debates only two weeks ago about the inadequacies of that procedure—is not appropriate for dealing with detailed planning issues, which should be the subject of a public local inquiry. The private Bill procedure is not a sensible way of dealing with major, strategic national issues about the use and spread of the economic benefits that the Channel tunnel can bring. All those issues are contained within the Bill, yet we are being asked to discuss them without prior consideration by the Select Committee on Transport, without any specific planning approach from British Rail, the Department of Transport or this House. That is not a sensible way to reach such a major decision.

The private Bill procedure used in this instance pays little respect to the rights of those who want to object to the proposals in the Bill. Two weeks ago, the Leader of the House claimed that private Bills were even-handed between objectors and promoters. They are not.

For example, one has to look only at the treatment meted out to English Heritage, which rightly said that it had an interest in clause 19. Clause 19 will affect several listed buildings within the purview of the site that British Rail seeks to contain within the work proposed in the Bill. Several buildings will be affected, such as a grade 2 listed building at No. 7 Caledonian road, dating from 1875, a grade 2 listed building, "The Bell" public house, at 259 Pentonville road and the Great Northern hotel, which is also a grade 2 listed building. All those buildings will go, yet English Heritage, which clearly has a valuable point of view on listed buildings, has not been allowed even to present a petition against the Bill. That is due wholly to the fact that the agents acting for British Rail sought to delete English Heritage from the list of petitioners against the Bill.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, until 50 years ago, there were only a mere handful of objections to locus standi? Within the past few weeks, British Rail has caught up the backlog of the past 50 years.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. British Rail's agents have objected to locus standi for well over 100 petitioners—I cannot remember the exact figure—including people and organisations from my own constituency and others such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who sought to put her own petition against the Bill. There is an organisation in my constituency called Crossfire—it has still to be considered by the Court of Referees so I shall not trespass on your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by dwelling on it—which has the particular purpose of protecting the King's Cross area from unnecessary and unwanted development. It has been challenged by British Rail, although it has a strong case to make and important points to put.

When a number of petitioners, who were accepted as having a locus standi by the promoters of the Bill, gathered to meet last Friday with representatives of British Rail, they were given an extremely dusty reception. When, for example, they asked for copies of the presentations that British Rail would be making to the Bill—one would expect them, as petitioners, to have that right—they were told that they could not have them. They were told further that if they wanted such copies, they would have to come to Parliament and pay the normal charges for copying.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, in a document circulated by British Rail which I received this morning, as in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), there are many references to the high-speed link? Yet all the organisations that have been careful to present arguments about the high-speed link have been denied locus standi.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is right: he identifies precisely the problem of dealing with a station apparently in complete isolation from any consideration of routes leading to it. That procedure is nonsense and it reveals the piecemeal way in which we are being asked to consider important issues. Over the past few months—and,

probably, in forthcoming months—we have heard of people whose livelihoods, properties, homes and area will be affected profoundly by the Bill, not being given a full democratic voice so that they can make objections and points about the Bill.

The Bill seeks to extinguish some reversionary rights in relation to parts of the land to the north of King's Cross, especially those possessed by the trustees of St. Bartholomew's hospital. The Bill seeks to extinguish those rights in relation to property development proposals that British Rail and the developers are seeking to implement by means of a Bill that should refer specifically to a Channel tunnel station. It is not sensible, fair or just to go about the process in such a way.

A number of proposals contained in the Bill relate to the overall Underground complex at King's Cross and contain some of the measures recommended in the Fennell report following the tragic fire one and a half years ago. The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton made much of those provisions in the Bill. It is worth pointing out that virtually none of those works requires Bill procedures to be implemented. Most could be implemented simply by going through the normal planning procedures, but British Rail has chosen not to do so. To argue that those works should be a reason to pass the Bill would be disingenuous. The Bill is not needed to ensure that those works go ahead.

Mr. Rowe: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understood from the Clerk of private Bills that private Bills could be used only for matters that could not be achieved in any other way. In view of what the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has just said, can we be assured that every item in the Bill can be achieved only through this Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The vires of a Bill are tested by the Examiners, who go through it meticulously to ensure that it satisfies the requirements of the Standing Orders before it is presented to the House. The Bill has been dealt with by the Examiners, it is satisfactory and it contains nothing contrary to our Standing Orders that should inhibit our discussion of it.

Mr. Spearing: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Irrespective of the truth of your remarks about the Examiners, is it not a fact that, if a Committee finds that part of the works in the Bill could be achieved by other means, it is within the powers of that Committee to require the promoters to take that part from the text as a condition of passing the Bill? It has been known on rare occasions for a Committee not to pass a Bill at all, I believe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us take it one step at a time and dispose of Second Reading in one way or another first.

Mr. Smith: Following that extremely interesting and important exchange, I trust that if the Bill receives a Second Reading—unfortunate though that would be—the Committee might consider that point. The provision in the Bill for works to relieve congestion in the Underground booking hall at King's Cross—which we all know was the site of the fire in November 1987—fulfils recommendation 142 of the Fennell report. A private Bill is not required for those works to be proceeded with. Indeed, London Underground has been discussing with Camden council an application for planning permission for precisely those works. It seems odd that London Underground should be applying for planning permission while at the same time joining British Rail in promoting the Bill.

I record my dismay at the way in which British Rail has constantly changed its mind—from one day to the next and from one issue to the next—in relation to King's Cross and all the works associated with it in the Bill. Some petitioners have at first been opposed as to locus standi but have subsequently been accepted. At one moment some of my hon. Friends have been told that passenger links with the north-west using rail lines linking the north-eastern and north-western lines may well be provided, while at the next British Rail is talking instead about a travelator running from King's Cross to Euston. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) may well have something more to say about that.

It seems crazy that so-called direct routes to the north-west should involve someone getting off a train at King's Cross, coming up to a different level with his baggage and travelling half a mile underground on a travelator on to another station, another platform and another train. If British Rail thinks of that as a direct link to the north-west from the Channel tunnel, it ought to think again.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that British Rail has presented the direct link in the north, the north-west and the north-east in a different way, which has not involved any emphasis on travelators? It has implied that there will be through services.

Mr. Smith: That is so. British Rail has had a wonderful record of implying one thing to some hon. Members and another to other hon. Members during the preparation of the Bill. When I met British Rail officials last Friday, they told me that what they have in mind is a travelator linking King's Cross and Euston. As far as I could divine, to all intents and purposes, that was the end of the story.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Does my hon. Friend have information to suggest that British Rail management will adopt a proposal similar to that for the so-called "Battersea Bullet"? Pictures at the windows give the impression that the train is moving at 150 miles an hour, although it is actually travelling at only 35 miles an hour. Does he think that British Rail has something similar in mind for the travelator?

Mr. Smith: I hesitate to follow my hon. Friend along that line. The difficulties of passenger transfer from a Channel tunnel train on to a completely different train starting from a different station are such that they must be obvious even to British Rail.

Mr. Dobson: Assuming that British Rail does not use the great circle route from King's Cross to Euston, the travelator will run entirely within my constituency. Did British Rail favour my hon. Friend with any indication of what route the travelator would take and whether it would be above or below ground?

Mr. Smith: The implication appeared to be that it would be below ground, but beyond that British Rail was not terribly forthcoming.

British Rail has changed its mind absolutely and completely about the choice of King's Cross in the first place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St.

[Mr. Smith]

Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, when the Select Committee discussed the location of the station for the Channel tunnel at Waterloo, it asked British Rail whether alternative locations in London would be better or worse than Waterloo. British Rail was specifically asked about King's Cross. Its answer to the Select Committee in October 1986 was that King's Cross was an infinitely worse location than Waterloo; so bad was it that British Rail ruled it out completely.

Let me quote from page 1829 of the proceedings of the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Bill on 28 October 1986. Counsel for British Rail said:

"The principal reservation"

about King's Cross

"is traffic congestion—which, as I say, features very badly compared with Waterloo."

British Rail now tells us that King's Cross is the best thing since sliced bread, although two and a half years ago it argued that it was the worst option. But the only thing that has changed in the past two and a half years is that the traffic congestion at King's Cross has got worse.

Mr. Tony Banks: Did my hon. Friend raise that matter in any of his discussions with British Rail? If so, what was its response?

Mr. Smith: I have certainly made the point in my various discussions with British Rail, but I do not think that I have yet received a response on it.

I have three major reasons for opposing the Bill and asking the House to refuse to give it a Second Reading. The first is its impact on the local neighbourhood. It will cut a swathe across the south-western corner of my constituency. It will involve the compulsory purchase of 17 acres of property to the east and south-east of the station. It will involve the demolition of almost all the 150 buildings on that 17-acre site. It will mean diverting two of London's main traffic arteries and blocking many other roads. It will mean excavating a 40 ft pit across most of the site, for a period of two years at least.

Thousands of people live and work in the buildings to be destroyed: 329 people will lose their homes; 59 local shops will have to close; 130 other businesses will lose their premises; 2,114 local jobs will go; the main Euston road post office will disappear.

In addition, the measure represents the destruction of a thriving local community. Over the past 20 years, much effort by local councils and by local people in particular has been put into the building up of a good, thriving, lively neighbourhood at King's Cross. Houses have been rehabilitated. The neighbourhood has been re-established as a wonderful place for people to live and be in. That will be destroyed by the proposals. Nothing can take that from the defects of the Bill.

Meanwhile, British Rail, which is proposing to gobble up 17 acres—with all the homes, jobs and people who will be affected—owns 125 acres to the north-east of King's Cross station. If it insists on using King's Cross as a location for its second Channel tunnel station, why on earth does it not use the land that it already owns rather than seek compulsory purchase of land and destroy jobs and homes in the process? Perhaps I can provide an answer on behalf of the promoter of the Bill. The reason is that British Rail does not want in any way to endanger the profit which it expects to make from the development of railway lands to the north of King's Cross station. If it builds the new station there, that is precisely what will happen.

The second reason for opposing the Bill is that it will have a severe impact on congestion in the surrounding area. King's Cross is already one of the most congested locations in London, both above and below ground. We know that from the tragic events of November 1987. British Rail now proposes to put 15 million extra passengers a year through King's Cross. Quite simply, King's Cross cannot cope with that extra load. However the works are done and however much the underground booking hall is extended, King's Cross will not cope with the extra traffic, either above or below ground. Above-ground conditions will be particularly severe.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton, parroting what British Rail has frequently said about the Bill, said that the philosophy behind the King's Cross location is its easy access by public transport. That may be the philosophy behind the choice of King's Cross, but it will not necessarily be the event—the actuality—of the location of the second Channel tunnel station. People will want to be met by coaches or by relatives. People will go to ground level and take taxis. People will arrive by train from Paris and get off at King's Cross. They will not go to the Underground but will get transport at road level. They will go into an already fiercely congested area.

Perhaps I can put it no better than the local chief superintendent of police put it in his annual report only a month or so ago. On policing in the King's Cross area, he wrote:

"Plans for Kings Cross Railway Station will make it a major travel centre for Europe. This has major traffic implications for the area, even now the roads are unable to cope with the volume of traffic."

They are not my words. They are the words of the Metropolitan police. The police have identified what British Rail has ignored and what the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton has sought to obfuscate—the severe traffic implications of what is being proposed for King's Cross and the surrounding area.

The third reason for opposing the Bill is that it represents a total absence of proper national strategic planning of the benefits from the Channel tunnel. As a nation, we should seriously think about how best to maximise the economic benefits that can be derived from the Channel tunnel and how to spread them as effectively as possible around the country. Putting services into King's Cross will not necessarily do that.

Let us carefully examine British Rail's claims about direct services to the north. In meetings that I and my colleagues have had with British Rail, it has said that, at most, it expects only a quarter of trains going into King's Cross to go northward from King's Cross. In other words, a small minority of trains will provide direct services to the north. Most trains will terminate at King's Cross. Indeed, British Rail gave that fact away in its information pack on the Channel tunnel rail link. Its leaflet called "Rail Services" refers to journey times for passengers and a new terminus at King's Cross—not a station: a terminus. A terminus is where trains stop and go no further. That is what British Rail has in mind for the great majority of traffic from the Channel tunnel to King's Cross.

All the talk about the possibility of direct links is a smokescreen to disguise the fact that the overwhelming majority of traffic will go to King's Cross and end there.

That is not a recipe for spreading the geographic and economic benefits of the Channel tunnel. It is a recipe for funnelling everything into the centre of London. That principle is behind British Rail's policy on the Bill.

Frankly, British Rail and hon. Members who argue its case about routes from King's Cross to the north have been disingenuous in their claims about the benefit of King's Cross as a location. The Bill represents no strategic thinking or planning. It will bring few long-term benefits, cause large-scale traffic chaos in much of north and north-east London, and involve the massive destruction of a thriving local neighbourhood. The Bill should be refuted.

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This evening President Ortega of Nicaragua is addressing a rally at Central hall, which is not far from the House. A provocative counter-demonstration in support of the Contras is taking place not feet from the entrance to the hall and is resulting in a breach of public order. Two people have already been arrested. I have approached the police and asked them why it has been allowed, and they have said that they have given permission. I ask you, as Deputy Speaker, to make inquiries.

Students were not allowed to demonstrate within a mile of Parliament. Given that this demonstration is resulting in a breach of the peace and is an insult to a democratically elected President, I ask you to use your authority and ask for an explanation from the Metropolitan police.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Chair has no authority to intervene in a matter for which it has no responsibility.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you have jurisdiction when an hon. Member approaches the police and asks them to explain to demonstrators that they are in breach of the law, is refused access to the demonstrators, and is told by Inspector Grigg that he does not intend to tell them that they are in breach of the law? Surely you can do something when the upholders of the law are refusing to allow lawmakers access to people to tell them that they are breaking the law. Surely that is a serious breach.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It might be a breach, but it has nothing to do with the Chair of the House of Commons.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friends are saying that the demonstration is not in breach of any statute but in breach of the Sessional Orders which we pass at the beginning of each Session of Parliament. There have been precedents. In the past, Mr. Speaker has undertaken to examine whether the Sessional Orders were being breached. Therefore, in those circumstances, it might be helpful if you could ask whether some Officers of the House might do that. The demonstration outside Central hall, Westminster could be breaching those Sessional Orders.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a reasonable request, and without any commitment, I shall follow the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

7.49 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I rise briefly to join Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends in opposing the Bill. I do so for two reasons. First, I cannot see the area of King's Cross having the capacity to cope with the massive amount of traffic and congestion that would result from a terminus being built there. Secondly, if the legislation is not right in the first place, I see the battle of King's Cross today being the battle of Kent tomorrow and indeed the battle of the rest of the country as the 1990s progress towards the millennium.

On the first point, it seems most odd that a national transport institution such as British Rail is commencing a route from Europe into the capital of this country, starting at both ends, but being relatively unconcerned about what happens in the middle. Clearly, we need a national statement by British Rail about its policy for the country as a whole. I do not like and have not liked for some years the piecemeal approach that British Rail has developed towards access to and from Europe. I liken it to the dance of Salome and the seven veils. The unfortunate thing is that when we think that we are getting to veil No. 7 and are about to see the body beautiful, another seven veils are added. We are no nearer to the truth as we perceive it than we were when we started with the whole vexed question of this policy.

As an hon. Member representing north-west Kent, I can say that we were more than a little dismayed when the individuals and organisations along the route in Kent made applications to the Court of Referees for leave to appear before the appropriate Committee of this House to have their objections heard, but were turned down. We felt that that was wrong because we have as much interest in this legislation as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and his hon. Friends who represent central London. In that sense, unusual and unlikely as it is, we are at one in our opposition to this proposition.

I shall develop my argument on British Rail's piecemeal approach for a moment longer, because the House will understand that this is the first opportunity that I have had, as a Kentish Member, of getting my views on record about British Rail's proposals for the high-speed link and the consequential effect on London termini. The House will remember that some years ago we were told by British Rail that the Channel tunnel would have no impact on the need for extra rail capacity and that the existing network services could cope. Yet, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury has said, today we are debating a proposition which, in the eyes of British Rail, was apparently wrong some time previously.

I should like to speak on two matters—the two instructions that have been chosen by Mr. Speaker for debate and the instruction tabled by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), which refers to Stratford East. I am supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) in saying that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is absolutely right that British Rail should give

"adequate consideration to other possible locations at King's Cross and the proposal for a station at Stratford East".

I have total support for that as it would give the appropriate Committee of this House the opportunity to consider alternatives to the proposed route two for the high-speed rail link route through Kent. As the House

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

knows, my views on the high-speed link are quite simple. If British Rail wishes to place a high-speed route through my constituency, it can do so on one condition—that it goes underground. Under the terms of the proposal tabled by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, British Rail could also consider TALIS—the Thames alternative link international system—which commands a great deal of support in north-west Kent. Therefore, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

The thing that worries me about this whole vexed matter is the impact on the environment. Any hon. Member whose constituency is affected by King's Cross, or by the preferred route 2 cannot but give statement to and evidence of the great distress and anxiety that the proposal has caused and will cause to many thousands of individuals, communities, places of work and to those who, like me, seek to protect the green belt, such as we have left, in north-west Kent.

Further, I am especially concerned that the promoter of the Bill did not refer in some detail to the impact of clause 19. It is an interesting clause and the precedents for the inclusion of such a clause in a private Bill are limited. The implications of clause 19 are that this private Bill will seek to override the general public law on the protection of listed buildings. If clause 19 were enacted, a precedent would have been created for the inclusion of similar clauses in other legislation from British Rail or from any other institution seeking to undertake a project of a similar scale and type.

We in Kent have suffered for some years from a tremendous demand for housing and urban development. We have a whole series of historic places from Folkestone to Bexley that would be severely affected and would have no protection under general law if a clause 19-type provision were included in the Channel tunnel high-speed link legislation as, if and when it comes forward. That is why I register my great concern about clause 19, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) will reply to that point later.

Ultimately, we must consider ourselves in the traditional role of the House—as the guardians of the rights of the individual. The old-age pensioner in King's Cross and in Dartford has the same right to have his or her views made known about the legislation as do the large institutions of both corporate and local variety. If we cannot air our views in this way and make it easier for an individual to have his or her views made known, what are we doing in our business as legislators?

I commend the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and other hon. Members, and welcome entirely the stance that he has taken because—I repeat—the battle of King's Cross today is the battle of north Kent and of Kent as a whole tomorrow.

7.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am surprised and disappointed that the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) has allowed himself to be used in such a way by British Rail. I understand—the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—that British Rail had some difficulty in finding someone to promote the Bill. Clearly, the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), whom one would normally expect to promote such a Bill, is not in his place. The hon. Member for Acton will learn in due course that he has been handed a parliamentary equivalent of the black spot from blind Pugh. If the Bill is ever passed, I suspect that when the hon. Gentleman passes through Kent he will need to go with a large entourage of bodyguards around him—because, as we know, he has a rather large body—plus a white stick.

I have a variety of reasons for opposing the Second Reading of the King's Cross Railway Bill. First, it is outrageous that such a vital strategic decision will be made without proper consideration of the transport needs of London or the south-east. There has been so meaningful consultation over the King's Cross proposal. British Rail has acted like a bunch of bully boys. it has been arrogant, high-handed and, what is even worse, it is now trying to use this place as a parliamentary rubber stamp for its proposals. We should not allow ourselves to be used in that fashion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, the private Bill procedure was not designed for such complex strategic decision making.

I was one of the members of the Joint Committee that considered the private Bill procedure. The Committee was concerned that normal planning arrangements were being increasingly by passed through the private Bill procedure. One of our recommendations—on which I hope the House will eventually make a decision—was that environmental impact studies should accompany such proposals. At least we would then know that there had been some attempt to consider the planning and environmental impact implications of proposals contained in private Bills. I heard the Prime Minister in all her ignorance state recently that the private Bill procedure gave adequate opportunities for objectors to put their case. Clearly, she has never sat on a Committee considering a private Bill. If she had, she would never have made such an ill-informed comment.

Secondly, we have already heard that British Rail is knocking out as many of the potential petitions as it possibly can by challenging the locus standi of objectors. Indeed, more objections concerning locus standi have been raised by British Rail on this Bill than in the previous 50 years. That is no way to convince people that one is prepared to consult and to have people examine one's proposals fairly and impartially. Instead, British Rail is using a technical device to ensure that the voice of opposition is never heard during the private Bill Committee stage. The private Bill procedure is entirely inadequate as a substitute for properly convened public inquiries. I believe, as do hon. Members on both sides of the House, that there should be a proper public inquiry before the Bill is allowed to proceed.

Thirdly, the King's Cross Railway Bill is about the location of a terminal. However, Parliament is being asked to take that decision before it has been asked to determine the route of the rail link from the tunnel to the new second terminal. It is a classic case of putting the carriages before the engine. If that is the way in which British Rail runs a transport undertaking, it comes as little surprise that so many of its trains have recently been crashing into the buffers.

What confidence can one have in an organisation such as British Rail, which finds itself seeking permission to construct a second terminal before the first one is built? What level of ineptitude has led British Rail to

miscalculate passenger demand completely so soon after the decision to make Waterloo the site of the London terminal? As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury correctly reminded us, it was during the Committee stage of the Channel Tunnel Bill that British Rail's so-called experts specifically ruled out King's Cross as a site. What has changed in the couple of years that have since passed? All we know is that there is far more traffic congestion and chaos on the roads of London, and certainly around King's Cross, than there was two and a half years ago.

I believe that it is a monumental miscalculation that British Rail is now bringing this new proposal before us. It is breathtaking stupidity. I do not see how the House can have any confidence or trust in British Rail's ability to get its next decision right, when one considers how badly it got its first decision wrong. How can we take its arguments seriously any more?

All British Rail's decision-making processes have been carried out behind a veil of secrecy. It has shown sheer insensitivity about the needs, wishes and fears of people both in London and Kent, which is no way to treat people. If this terminal is supposed to be for the people of London, of the south-east and of the country as a whole, they should be consulted about decisions that are taken by grey, faceless bureaucrats in the British Rail headquarters.

Fourthly, there is a planning vacuum in the south-east. When I visited British Rail and stressed the strategic implications of the decision enshrined within the Bill, it told me that its only concern was running a transport undertaking. It was not its function or responsibility to act as the strategic transport planning authority for London. I accepted what it said. The Secretary of State for Transport came to see the London group of Members of Parliament. He probably thought it was safer to be with us at that time than being chased by people about a variety of matters affecting aircraft safety. When asked a direct question, he told our group that he was not responsible for strategic transport planning in London. The House is entitled to know who is. I still cannot believe that someone as young as the Minister for Public Transport is in a position of such authority in the Government. He is the young Lochinvar of the Conservative party. He is perhaps the person to whom we should turn and ask about the transport strategic decision-making processes in London.

Mr. Spearing: I was so intrigued by the admission of a planning vacuum by the Secretary of State for Transport, who everyone assumed had that responsibility, that I ventured a written question to him. To my surprise, the answer that came back was that the statutory responsibility for co-ordinating public transport in London was with London Regional Transport. My only comment on that was, as in most other things, that that did not give me any confidence.

Mr. Banks: One can hardly be surprised at that. We find it difficult to accept that a vacuum should be allowed to exist. In many ways one can believe that it is a positive dereliction of duty towards the people of London and the south-east that no one is prepared to take responsibility for strategic decisions that will affect the country for decades to come. No other European country would go about things in such a half-cocked way as this Government, aided and abetted by British Rail—or perhaps it is the other way round.

The suggestion that all strategic matters can be dealt with by a private Bill Committee of four Members of Parliament would be laughable if it were not so serious and far-reaching. We are told that we are now the substitute planning inquiry. That is fine, because Members of Parliament like to think that they have a little power. The Prime Minister does not often give us very much. Therefore, this is the beginning of the process. This is the Second Reading, but where is everyone? They will all troop in later. I shall look very carefully to see whether the Prime Minister once again turns up in her curlers and slippers, as she did for one of the earlier private Bills. I shall also be interested to see whether the payroll vote has been whipped in.

Mr. Snape: It was the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend said that it was not the Prime Minister, but that it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was probably going off to another disco, with his shirt slashed to his very ample waist, revealing a very hirsute chest. It was the sort of sight to turn a strong stomach. It was not the sort of thing that a clean-living Member of Parliament such as myself would wish to be associated with.

Although those hon. Members will not have been involved in the discussion, they will vote. Planning matters cannot be left to that level of uncertainty and that lack of involvement.

We are told that the private Bill procedure is an adequate replacement for planning procedure. The Prime Minister herself said that. It is not so. Four Members will be asked to sit on that Private Bill Committee, and they will not even have an interest in the area. One of the requirements to sit on an opposed Bill Committee is that one does not have a constituency interest. Often, that means that there is no interest. The Members just want to get out of the Committee as fast as possible. Such an important decision should not be left in the hands of people who will not want the opportunity with which we shall present them.

I want the House to reject the Bill so that British Rail can give proper consideration to the other options for the location of the terminal. If the House will not do that, I hope that it will at least pass to the Committee the instruction on the Order Paper which will require British Rail to look seriously at the options. So far, it has just put up a facade of consultation and consideration. We want it to consider the options properly, particularly the option of Stratford in the borough of Newham.

My council has been campaigning consistently for the terminal to be located at Stratford in the east end, in my constituency. We want it there for a variety of reasons. There is adequate British Rail-owned land there already. There will be no need to destroy listed buildings and community facilities, as will happen if the terminal is located at King's Cross. Stratford has a railway tradition going back to the 19th century. There is adequate transport infrastructure and more is planned, for which we are grateful. The development at Stratford will give a further boost to the economic development of the east end as a whole. Of great significance, the London borough of Newham entirely supports the location of the terminal in our area. That support is also given by the surrounding boroughs.

Mr. Leighton: Has my hon. Friend noticed the remarkable fact that everywhere else—for example in Kent and most other places in Britain—we have the "not in my back yard" factor? The London borough of Newham is saying, "Please put this in our back yard." Is that not completely unprecedented? Surely it must weigh with British Rail when an area will give a welcome to the development and not the opposition that one sees everywhere else.

Mr. Banks: A new acronym is born, IOBY—in our back yard. We are saying, "Yes, we are prepared to have the development, and the surrounding local authorities will co-operate with the Government and British Rail in locating it." It is not often that the young Minister gets such an offer, yet he is turning his face against it. It is a great pity for London, the south-east and the country as a whole.

I realise that several of my hon. Friends have expressed a clear preference for King's Cross over Stratford. I hope that they will take time to read the report commissioned by Newham from Colin Buchanan and Partners, which puts the case for Stratford rather than King's Cross. It is described as the case the nation must hear. I shall ensure that the Minister gets a copy and I hope that he will study it *[Interruption.]* The Minister has a copy. Excellent. That means that the communications system has been working well. I hope that he has read the report. If he has, I am sure that it will convince him that the decision that he will be allowed to make to locate the second terminal at King's Cross is wrong and that he should quickly change his position.

It is not surprising that since British Rail made the proposal, it cannot reject the notion that others will also explore the idea of a Channel tunnel terminal, in this case at Stratford. This is especially true since it appears that the comparative studies originally considered necessary by British Rail have not been carried out other than in a very cursory manner indeed. The Buchanan study does not claim to have done justice to all the technical matters involved in making a proper comparison between King's Cross and Stratford, but it has carried the analysis far enough to show that a high-speed rail link from the Channel tunnel to a new terminal at Stratford will be far cheaper than British Rail's proposal involving King's Cross. The capital cost saving would probably be in the range of £500 million to £1,100 million. Partly because of the imaginative cross-rail proposal which has emerged from the central London rail study since the decision on King's Cross was taken, the time disadvantage of Stratford compared with King's Cross for a journey from Paris to central London probably averages no more than five minutes, while in certain key areas, notably Canary wharf and the Liverpool street area, journey times via Stratford would be much quicker.

Stratford is capable of providing the onward rail connections for through services with journey times not noticeably different from those achievable via King's Cross. Where through services are not operated because the demand does not justify them, an interchange is necessary in London. Travel times would also be very close. The Stratford site will shortly be connected directly to the M11 and could easily accommodate the car and coach parking essential to a major international transport terminal.

King's Cross, by contrast, lies at one of the most persistently congested points of London's road network —the worst point at which to locate a major traffic generator. Because Stratford is near the Temple Mills mashalling yards and because it can have new carriage cleansing yards adjacent to it, it would permit the operation of a much tidier, more self-contained and cost-effective rail operation, with freight services able to make use of the full length of the high-speed line wherever traffic paths can be made available between passenger services.

A Channel tunnel terminal at Stratford would be of a quality, spaciousness and greenness which, no matter how clever the architecture, can never be matched underground at King's Cross in the midst of one of the most tangled and congested rail complexes in the world. A Channel tunnel terminal at Stratford offers the opportunity to achieve a major inner-city redevelopment of the type known to be favoured by Ministers which could accord with the key planning objectives recently set out by the Secretary of State for the Environment. A Channel tunnel terminal at Stratford accords with the local plan for the area, whereas one at King's Cross contradicts the recently adopted local plan of Camden.

There are many good reasons why the House, if it will not throw out the Bill, should at least take the opportunity through the private Bill procedure to consider in some depth what is clearly a viable alternative that would meet the needs of London, the fears of the people of Kent and provide the sort of facility that the east end desperately needs. It would enable us to serve transport in London and the country as a whole in a way that would not cause the damage and distress in King's Cross that the Bill proposes.

For all those reasons I ask the House, even if it is minded to give the Bill a Second Reading—I hope that there are enough of us to vote it down—at least to accept the instruction that stands in my name and those of hon. Members on both sides, so that proper consideration can be given to the viable alternative of Stratford.

8.18 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): It may be helpful to the House if I intervene at this point to set out the Government's position on the Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on an extremely lucid and helpful explanation of the Bill.

Perhaps I should begin by emphasising that the Bill does not deal with the development of the King's Cross railway land. That is entirely a planning matter which is the subject of planning applications currently lodged with the London borough of Camden. The Bill deals with proposed operational railway and underground works, the need for which is independent of the development of that site. Some part of that need is urgent. The relevance of the wider planning issue to the Bill is that British Rail and London Regional Transport either seek powers now for their railway development or lose the chance of effective railway development at King's Cross if the rest of the development then proceeds. Once any development is completed, it will be impossibly expensive to carry out extensive railway projects on the scale envisaged.

There are three distinct elements in the Bill: first, BR works to permit commuter services which operate into King's Cross to use St. Pancras; secondly, BR works to

construct a low-level station for the use of rail services, whether domestic or international; and thirdly, LRT works to improve London Underground facilities.

There are several ways in which the Bill affects my Department. As British Rail's sponsoring Department, we must be satisfied that the powers being sought are appropriate, that safety considerations are adequately addressed and that the projects are likely to meet the appropriate investment rules. The same is true in respect of the works proposed by London Regional Transport for London Underground in which important and specific safety considerations arise from the Fennell report and less specific safety considerations also arise that relate to the relief of congestion through the enlargement of an Underground station.

We should also be concerned with the broad impact of the proposals taken together, on the existing transport system, including the road system around the King's Cross area. My hon. Friend the Member for Acton described British Rail's plan, first to link St. Pancras to the east coast main line to relieve congestion at King's Cross and secondly, to provide for the enhancement of the Thameslink service through King's Cross by using the low level station. British Rail believes that both measures are required—the first more urgently than the second—to cope with the growth in the use of those services. If Parliament grants the powers, the board will, in due course, submit the investment proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport for his approval. If they offer good value for money, I am sure that he will be pleased to approve them.

In principle, what is proposed in the Bill looks sensible and we support British Rail in seeking the powers at this stage. This is a further step in British Rail's plans to create a modern railway to carry traffic to and through London.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend explain something about which I have never been entirely clear? If somebody were able to present a plan that provided better value for money than British Rail's plan, would my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State be able to direct British Rail either to give over its plan or to think it out again?

Mr. Portillo: We do not yet know whether British Rail proposes to bring forward an investment case of its own. I think that the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has wider implications encompassing the Channel link through Kent. We do not yet know if British Rail intends to bring forward an investment proposal of its own or will seek Government approval through a private sector arrangement. All I can say is that the discussions that British Rail will have with consortia will be closely followed with intense interest by the Government.

The Government are currently considering the board's commercial case for King's Cross as a second international railway station in London in preference to other possible locations. I hope that we shall have reached a conclusion on the matter by the time that the Government submit their report on the Bill to the Select Committee.

The commercial case for the low-level station may involve us in considering the traffic, both domestic and international, that would be made possible by a new rail link between London and the Channel tunnel. The reasons for the timing of the Bill have been explained and I can assure the House that granting British Rail the powers to build this station does not prejudge the case for a new link or its route. The House would be agreeing only to British Rail's proposition that if there is to be a second central London international station at King's Cross it should be constructed in the manner indicated.

In the short term at least, international traffic could reach King's Cross by the Thameslink line rather than a new line from Kent. In addition to the proposals in the Bill to connect the low-level station to both the east coast and midland main lines, I am told that it would be comparatively straightforward to connect the west coast main line, and that this is being considered by British Rail.

Mr. Tony Banks: Has the Minister asked his officials to study the alternatives of TALIS and Stratford? If so, what reports have they made to him?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is jumping the gun. I have explained that we have not yet approved the British Rail investment case for King's Cross, and we look forward to looking at it. If an adequate case for King's Cross is put forward by British Rail, we shall be pleased to approve it.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Minister referred to an adequate case being put forward by British Rail for King's Cross. Has he had the opportunity to see the documents that convinced British Railways Board members that King's Cross was the right location? The reasons for its decision would have been based on comparisons between alternative termini, costings, engineering plans, environmental impact. If the Minister has seen the documents on which British Rail board members based their decision, will he place them in the House of Commons Library so that hon. Members who have to make a decision on the same issues at least have the benefit of that information?

Mr. Portillo: I return to the point that I made a few moments ago, that we have not yet considered a formal case for King's Cross.

Ms. Harman: What are we here for?

Mr. Portillo: I have tried to explain to the House that the Bill has come to the House before the decision on the investment case has been taken. That should not be a surprise to hon. Members because that point has been made a number of times.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way at this stage because this is what Parliament is all about. The Minister has made some important statements. Is he saying that the Government agree with this location in principle but are reserving their case on the commercial element? The Minister nods. Does he remember that not long ago the Prime Minister, at that very seat, said that the private Bill procedure was as good as, and better than, any planning inquiry? The Minister now says that the Government, without any planning inquiry, and before the Committee has met and any debate concluded, have decided in principle that, given the commercial case, King's Cross is the right location. Is that not an example of the elective dictatorship at work?

Mr. Portillo: About halfway through the hon. Gentleman's intervention I entirely lost him. Let me try to explain the position. British Rail is charged with running commercial rail services between cities and internationally.

[Mr. Portillo]

There is to be no subsidy of the rail services provided by British Rail, either between cities or internationally, and if there is to be no subsidy from taxpayers' money there should be no interference from the Government in the choice of location for its terminals made by British Rail because that is a commercial matter. However, if the terminal to be is to be financed by British Rail—and as BR is a nationalised industry—obviously the case for its investment in one station rather than another must be convincingly made to the Government. The decision has not yet been taken but that does not make it impossible for the House to consider the case for the King's Cross Railways Bill now before us.

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry that I was a little too quick in making my point. The Minister has confirmed that the Government, subject to a commercial arrangement, are in favour of the location. As I explained earlier, the Prime Minister claimed that a Committee to consider a Bill was as good as any public inquiry, but an inquiry has not taken place. By giving the Bill its Second Reading tonight and giving the Government's imprimatur to the location, is not the case prejudiced because it has not been scrutinised properly? That is so unless the promoter is going to accept the location, which he has not yet said.

Mr. Portillo: From such a renowned constitutionalist, I find what the hon. Gentleman said very surprising. We are saying that British Rail is right in principle to bring forward the Bill. I intend to explain that the Government believe that the Bill should be given a Second Reading, that the Committee has an extremely important job in considering all the relevant matters and that there are some points on which the Government have doubts. If I manage to make progress with my speech I shall reach those points.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Bill will be widely welcomed in Leicestershire, particularly the new link from the midland main line? However, there is concern that this will not be electrified and, therefore, the link will not be used to its full extent.

Mr. Portillo: It has been suggested to me that the Bill would be welcomed in Leicestershire and also that the midland main line should be electrified. However, British Rail must consider whether it wishes to make an investment case for that. My hon. Friend should also consider that electrification is one of only a number of ways in which services on lines can be improved.

Mr. Dobson: It was so long ago that I hope I am not misquoting the Minister, but I believe that he said that he understood from British Rail that it would be possible to link the works at King's Cross to the west coast main line. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was told by British Rail as recently as Friday that it is contemplating doing that by way of a travelator more than a quarter of a mile long. When was the Minister told by British Rail that it could make a link to the west coast main line? Does British Rail envisage doing that by means of a travelator or a railway line?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman has quoted me with tolerable accuracy. I said:

"I am told that it would be comparatively straightforward to connect the west coast main line, and that this is being considered by BR."

I referred to a railway line, not a travelator.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Minister has given way generously, and I appreciate that. He said that no taxpayers' money was to be used and that the funds would come from British Rail. To what extent will property development desiderata play a part in this? Documents that I have seen suggest that British Rail wants the terminus at King's Cross because it is superior for property development and British Rail will make a lot of money out of it. That, rather than traffic considerations, weighs heavily with British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Both property development and traffic considerations could be important. The Government will look for an economic case to be made for the station; it will include station property and traffic. I have not yet seen that case, so I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman what the proportions between the two will be.

Mr. Dobson: Is the Minister saying that, when considering the proposals for the railway works at King's Cross, the Government will consider property speculation on the 125 acres of surplus railway land to the north of King's Cross?

Mr. Portillo: No, I was saying that the question whether the low-level station is viable has to do with the traffic that might be generated by it and the property development that might be associated with it. As I said in my opening paragraph, the railway lands around King's Cross are outwith this measure and will be considered through the normal processes by the submission of a planning application to the London borough of Camden.

I turn now to the implications of the Bill's proposals for the Underground. The Bill will allow the present Underground ticket hall to be enlarged, and a new one to be constructed to serve the deep tube lines and BR's Thameslink and channel tunnel traffic. It also provides for a series of new subways between the various platforms, ticket halls and the surface. These works are needed to implement one of the recommendations of the Fennell investigation into the King's Cross fire. Mr. Fennell recommended that London Underground should build a direct subway link between the deep tube lines and the Metropolitan and Circle lines, or provide alternative satisfactory means of relieving the serious congestion. He considered that an important recommendation.

Although the detailed appraisal of this aspect of the proposals has yet to be completed and presented to the Department, the Government support these improvements in principle. I am sure that the House will be pleased to support measures designed to relieve congestion in one of the busiest stations in the London Underground system——

Mr. Dobson: Have British Rail or London Underground—or the two between them—calculated the net effect of the improvements set against the additional 60,000 passengers that they contemplate? It sounds to me possible that the place will be more overcrowded as a result of the proposals.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman asks me a question which is better directed to the promoters of the Bill. It would probably be more appropriately asked in Committee than on Second Reading.

As far as the impact of the proposals on the road network is concerned, we are discussing the technical issues with British Rail, the King's Cross developers and the London boroughs of Camden and Islington with a view to identifying the separate and combined effects of the development and the railway works. Our first priority will be to judge the overall effect of all the proposals on the trunk roads for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the highway authority, and on the designated roads for which he is the approving authority for borough proposals. We also need to consider the wider implications for other borough roads in the area.

When taking these discussions forward, we shall be able to draw in the first instance on traffic information in the document supporting the developers' planning application to the London borough of Camden and in the environmental impact assessment which BR will submit in relation to its proposals.

Our main aim will be to safeguard the efficient movement of traffic on the strategic network of trunk and designated roads in the area around King's Cross.

Ms. Harman: Does the Minister think it right that the House should be asked to give a Second Reading to the Bill when British Rail has not yet allowed hon. Members sight of, or published, the environmental impact assessment of these proposals? Should we not have those plans before we are asked to vote?

Mr. Portillo: That is another question for the promoters, not for me. The Bill must pass through several stages, as the hon. Lady knows, and the environmental impact assessment will be made available during the passage of the Bill. It concerns the Government, too, as I shall explain in a moment.

Some improvements will be possible with the introduction of better traffic management techniques, but if the additional traffic demand is heavy, changes to the trunk road, particularly at the junction of Euston road with Pentonville road and York way, might be necessary to accommodate it. A former GLC scheme for this junction, the St. Chad's place scheme, has been safeguarded. We are reviewing it to see whether it will be adequate, given the proposed developments. We would expect to submit a progress report on the road issues to the Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Acton referred to an environmental impact assessment which British Rail has commissioned in connection with the railway works in the Bill. I understand that it will be available well before the Select Committee begins considering petitions against the Bill. The Government welcome the fact that British Rail has chosen to carry out this assessment. Although the European Community directive on environmental impact assessment does not, strictly speaking, apply to works authorised by a private Bill, BR has chosen to operate within the spirit of the directive and of the recent Joint Committee report on private Bill procedure.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was present for parts of the debate on 20 April on private Bill procedure, and although I was abroad on official business that day, I have read *Hansard* with great interest. The Government are considering how best to proceed in the light of the Joint Committee's report and of the debate, but the House will recognise that for the time being there is no alternative to the private Bill procedure. Speaking for myself, I cannot regard it as bad that a project of this size and importance for the national railway system should be considered by Parliament, rather than exclusively by a local planning inspector and Ministers of whatever party. Doubts in that regard were expressed by hon. Members on both sides and, as I have said, we are carefully considering all the issues raised by the report and the debate, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House promised just over three weeks ago——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Minister accept that no one on the Opposition Benches argues that either Parliament or the planning procedure should be used? We are arguing for both—for a proper planning inquiry and then parliamentary scrutiny.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady makes her point, but I am not sure whether going through the processes twice, with all the delay that that involves, is in the best interests of anyone, including the objectors. As it happens, in this case we are dealing with two closely related matters—the railway works in the Bill and the broader development in the King's Cross area. On the latter, there will be normal planning procedures involving the submission of an application to the London borough of Camden. To that extent, the hon. Lady may be contented, because there will be both a planning procedure and a private Bill procedure.

The works proposed will affect several listed buildings in the area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is concerned about clause 19, the effect of which is to disapply the special controls that normally apply to listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas. My right hon. Friend accepts that exceptional circumstances may justify overriding the normal statutory conservation safeguards, but he does not want that done at the expense of proper debate, for purposes not directly and specifically connected with British Rail's operational needs. He is currently in discussion with the promoters to establish the precise effect of their proposals on the listed buildings and conservation areas and will be considering the position further after consulting English Heritage. I understand that, apart from the two main line stations, which are listed grade I, there are seven buildings or structures listed grade II which are potentially affected by British Rail's plans, and two conservation areas.

My right hon. Friend had previously attached some weight to the fact that English Heritage was petitioning against the clause, since that would, in his view, have ensured that when the Bill was in Committee, Parliament would have the benefit of its independent and expert advice. In view of the decision by the Court of Referees to disallow English Heritage's petition, he will now be looking to the promoters to give satisfactory assurances —preferably by way of an additional clause in the Bill— that they will consult English Heritage; that they will give it adequate opportunities to record any buildings which have to be demolished; and that generally they will pay special regard to the desirability of preserving, so far as is practicable, the buildings and other features which give the

[Mr. Portillo]

area its special interest and character. Subject to that, he will be considering whether to report on the clause, and in what terms.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister is correct to remind the House that the Court of Referees did not accept the locus standi of English Heritage. That happened because British Rail challenged locus on the part of English Heritage, as it did on the part of a large number of other potential petitioners. What confidence can the House have that BR will give careful consideration to all the matters to which the Minister referred, given the way in which BR arrogantly and aggressively stopped people who were able to come before the Committee from appearing and giving the benefit of their advice?

Mr. Portillo: I am responsible neither for BR's action in challenging the locus standi of certain petitioners nor for the decisions of the Court of Referees. The Secretary of State for the Environment has responsibilities in those matters, and the hon. Gentleman will have heard me say that the Government will look for assurances, preferably by way of an additional clause in the Bill, and I hope that that will be of comfort to him on that point, which clearly concerns him.

Ms. Harman: I welcome the fact that the Minister has recognised that BR behaved wrongly in objecting to the locus standi of English Heritage. Will he bear in mind that many other organisations and individuals petitioned against the Bill, including myself on behalf of my constituents, and were also steamrollered out by BR's objection to locus? Will he, in addition to taking up the case of English Heritage, consider the cases of all those who petitioned and whose petitions were disgracefully ruled out on the basis of that challenge?

Mr. Portillo: No. The hon. Lady wilfully misunderstands what I said. I do not criticise British Rail in the matter; I simply said that I had no responsibility for it. I do not see how BR could have been wrong to mount a challenge, the Court of Referees having found its challenge to be in order. These are matters for the Court of Referees, although the Secretary of State for the Environment has special responsibilities which he will discharge in the manner I described.

I have indicated support in principle for the Bill. It is of course for the promoters to persuade Parliament that the powers they are seeking are justified. There remain against the Bill a great many petitions which raise important matters and which reflect genuine and widely felt concern about the proposals. The petitioners will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee. The Committee will be in a much better position than we are tonight to examine in detail the issues involved and will have the advantage of hearing expert evidence.

I therefore recommend to the House that the Bill be given a Second Reading and be allowed to proceed, in the usual way, to Committee for detailed consideration.

8.44 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The confusion surrounding the Bill has been added to, rather than cleared away, by the Minister's contribution. The newspapers tell us that the hon. Gentleman is the coming man of the Government. I have no wish to blight his future career, but I warn him that he must do better in future if he is to live up to the rave reviews that he has been receiving from the national press.

As my hon. Friends—and to be fair, some Conservative Members—have said, there is widespread unhappiness about the procedures that have been adopted towards the Bill. The Minister agreed that hon. Members in all parts of the House felt that the private Bill procedure was being abused from the point of view of this project. As for the management of British Rail, there is, to put it at its mildest, widespread unhappiness in the House about the way in which it has conducted itself in the conflicting and contradictory stories that have eminated from that source.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) spoke of the project being a partnership between the public and private sector. We would have no objection to that, if it were true. The problem with the Bill, as the Minister pointed out, is that the contribution from the private sector will be all-important because it will enable British Rail to meet the investment criteria laid down by the Government.

That being the problem, my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that BR owned a considerable amount of land at King's Cross which, in his opinion—and he should know, because he is the constituency Member—would provide an adequate site for a new railway station, if that were what BR was seeking. But that is not what is being sought by BR. It is seeking to maximise revenues on that valuable inner-city site to meet the investment criteria laid down by the Government, which will allow BR to build an underground station catering supposedly for international trade, supposedly to all parts of the country.

In explaining why BR had opted for that course, the hon. Member for Acton conceded that, when BR gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Channel tunnel, its forecast for cross-Channel passenger traffic was too low. The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) might have something to say privately to him about that because, when giving evidence to that Committee, BR made a number of statements which it subsequently contradicted. It told the Committee that there was no need for a high-speed rail link and that the Waterloo terminal would be sufficient for international passengers until the end of the century.

BR then changed its mind and said that its forecasts were too low. BR was cross-examined on a number of occasions when giving evidence to the Select Committee about the accuracy of its forecasts, but was adamant at that time that they were correct. What has changed since? Has BR been reading the Eurotunnel prospectus, which said that its forecasts were too low? Has BR been talking to its counterparts in SNCF, who felt at that time that the forecasts where too low? Or could it be that, to minimise opposition to the original Bill, BR deliberately pitched its forecasts at a low level, simply to get the Bill through the House? I do not know the answer, and the hon. Member who is acting for the promoters shows no signs of telling us. It would not be unusual, to say the least, for the British Rail management to mislead on these issues.

Mr. Rowe: If we are charitable enough to assume that British Rail was incompetent, rather than conspiratorial, in its forecasting, does that not bear out the criticism of

many of us about the fact that BR has remained adamantly opposed to accepting advice on any aspect of its great Euro-rail investment from any other source, be it the Swiss, the French or the Germans, even though the figures on which BR is now proceeding appear to be much closer to those of the French?

Mr. Snape: That is a valid question, and the hon. Gentleman should address it to the hon. Member for Acton who is acting on behalf of the promoters. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's view that it has been incompetence on the part of the BR management. Not that I question its incompetence; I worked for it for too long to believe that it is anything other than incompetent when it comes to making decisions of this kind. But we should not ignore the fact that, as well as incompetence, the BR management over the years has been adept at what has been called obfuscation about statistics relating to its business.

I am speaking of the railway management that, following the 1955 modernisation plan, decided to operate a multiplicity of different types of diesel locomotives. These were all stabled next to steam locomotives, with the inevitable maintenance problems that were bound to arise. It is the management that gave us massive marshalling yards for wagonload traffic from one end of Britain to another, only entirely to drop wagonload traffic thereafter. It is the management that tells us that the best way forward for the operation of passenger services in and around the capital is one-person operation locomotives and unmanned stations. That system gives the malicious an opportunity to board a train at a station which has no staff, to mug the passengers while the train is proceeding under the control of one person and to leave the train at another unmanned station.

Apart from the moral considerations of a management that approaches its duty in that way, that is not an economical way of running a train service. It is possible for people to board trains at unmanned stations, to ride on OPO trains and to alight from those trains at unmanned stations. The motivation for some individuals to pay their fare is perhaps somewhat lacking.

I am talking of the management that comes forward with a fresh barrage of statistics and supposed facts to convince us that the Bill is worthy of support.

A thread that has united us all, apart from the promoters and the Minister for Public Transport, whose somewhat confused contribution suggested that he is a man with a future behind him, is a mistrust of British Rail's management. That includes its intentions for King's Cross, and especially the way in which that station is to be operated for through international services to other parts of Britain.

Mr. Dunn: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to take the conspiratorial notion a stage further. Does he agree that it would be wrong for us to proceed with the Bill without having the Government's views made known to us on other routes? Does he agree also that it would be wrong for us to adjudicate on the Bill without knowing anything of British Rail's intention for freight and freight clients? I speak as a man with only a past to which he can look forward.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that the last part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention is not true. I am sure that he is not seeking my sympathy, and he will not get it.

The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that I do not know. British Rail has confused itself, so God knows what it does to the rest of us. The latest epistle from British Rail—I refer to its press release of Saturday 6 May—refers to freight using the existing north London line. It is especially vague about through passenger services to the north of England, especially to the north-west and to the part of the country which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I have the honour to represent in the west midlands. I know that that bothers you considerably, as it bothers me.

British Rail's current view—I stress "current"—is that it intends to cater for railway passengers from other parts of the country. If we are to accept that, the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) should be given a little more consideration by the hon. Member for Acton. My hon. Friend referred to passengers to and from south Wales. He spoke also of a letter from the Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales—I have a copy of it in front of me—on the future of services into Paddington and connections with Channel tunnel services to any part of the continent or with through services, if they are to operate, that will use the King's Cross terminal.

The lack of strategic planning is central to the flaws in British Rail's planning generally. There is a proposal for a dedicated rail link between Paddington and Heathrow that will be operated by the British Airports Authority. That does not give much comfort to those who wish to join the cross-Channel services. Sir Norman Payne and his BAA colleagues are obsessed with sites for Tie Rack, Sock Shop and even a chain called Knicker Box Ltd. It is hard to imagine that they will be too concerned about the impact of that dedicated rail line on a travel pattern that will involve the Channel tunnel project.

The central London rail study was referred to a few days ago by the Minister's boss, the Secretary of State for Transport. I understand that there are plans for a surface link—perhaps it will be a sub-surface link, but these matters confuse me—between Paddington and Liverpool Street. There is not much sign there of any coherent strategic plan for knitting these projects into the cross-Channel tunnel services, which are supposedly to pass through the new King's Cross international station.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for referring to the lack of coherent planning of underground railways in London. He has spoken also of connections to the London-north-western main line. From Stratford to Willesden there is an electrified railway line which projects onwards to Acton, Central and Acton, South. The direct route from Stratford to the south Wales main line would join the Great Western main line at Acton main line station. Is that not ironic?

Mr. Snape: That is an historic irony. My personal view is, that the great advantage of long-distance railway services is that they run from city centre to city centre. That has always been perceived as the great advantage of the railways when they are in competition with aviation, for example. By the very nature of things, airports are well away from the centres of towns or cities that they are supposed to serve.

We are told that the advantage of the King's Cross project for the rest of the country will be the through services, if they come to exist. Let us move away from

[Mr. Snape]

south Wales and the west, with the inadequacies of the proposed provision of services for those areas, and consider Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Carlisle, and the west coast main line. It has always been our understanding that British Rail intended to build and electrify a spur that would join the east coast main line with the west coast main line. It would allow through continental train services to pass via the new King's Cross international station to the parts of the country which I have just mentioned.

As long ago as 10 January, the chairman of the British Railways Board, Sir Robert Reid, wrote to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on the spur project. I came upon the letter because it was sent to the West Midlands regional forum, on which I have the honour to serve as chairman of the west midlands group of Labour Members. In that respect, the letter is in the public domain. In his letter, Sir Robert referred to through passenger trains to the west coast main line and stated:

"The current Parliamentary Bill"—

it was not current at the time but never mind, that was just one inaccuracy—

"concerned with the redevelopment proposals for King's Cross and St. Pancras does contain provision for a sub-surface station. If King's Cross were to be selected as the site for the second London station for International Passenger Trains, this facility would be used for that purpose."

It would be difficult to imagine any other purpose for the facility.

That being so, I am not sure what Sir Robert was getting at when he wrote that part of his letter. He added:

"So far as International Passenger Services beyond London are concerned, if the business demand does support the investment in the trains, it would be the Board's intention to provide rail connections from the sub-surface station at King's Cross to the East and West Coast Main Lines."

That proposal appears straightforward, and it was one accepted by the West Midlands regional forum, which included little me, at its face value—given that it was dated 10 January 1989.

Subsequently, two of my colleagues wrote to the Department of Transport about that matter. My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) received a letter from the Secretary of State for Transport, while my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) unaccountably received a reply from the Minister for Public Transport. Evidently, Privy Councillors write only to Privy Councillors, which is something else that I did not know. Personally, I do not mind receiving a letter from the Minister, provided that it is clearer than his speech this evening.

Remarkably, the letter dated 3 April from the Secretary of State and that dated 7 April from the Minister of State both include the following paragraph:

"I understand that British Rail's choice of Kings Cross as a second London terminal for Channel Tunnel passenger trains is not intended to prejudice the possibility of through passenger trains to and from the West Midlands. BR are considering whether to seek further powers for a new direct link from Kings Cross to the West Coast Main Line, or whether to retain their original plan of routing such trains via the West London Line."

Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) there are now three options.

Mr. Spearing: The third being White City?

Mr. Snape: I shall come to that possibility in a moment.

We are now presented with a choice of three different routes. There might be an electrified spur joining the east coast and west coast main line, or we may have to settle for the revamped west London line. Given the likely congestion that would occur once full services got under way, we in the west midlands do not find that a particularly attractive prospect. The third alternative may be ceremonially unveiled by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury—a travelator connecting King's Cross with Euston station. It is conceivable that, in the timetable for that brave new world after 1993, there may be through trains indicated between Birmingham and Brussels, Paris, or any of the other exotic locations about which I know very little.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): By train, anyway.

Mr. Snape: And he is on my side!

How will those new services be advertised if a travelator is used to connect the new King's Cross with the old—or not so old, because it was built only 20 years ago—Euston station? Will advertisements show an escalator, or will they show a man—and given the sexist nature of the British Railways Board, presumably it will be a man—bent double with suitcases and buckets and spades, stepping on to an escalator connecting the two stations? Will we be told what connecting services will be provided for the rest of the country?

In view of the contribution made by the hon. Member for Acton—I must not be hypocritical, because he did his best—it appears that no one knows what connecting services will be provided, and no one can say whether through services to other parts of the country will be provided.

I draw the Minister's attention the instruction in the name of my hon. Friends the Members for Holborn and St. Pancras and for Islington, South and Finsbury, which refers to the need for the Committee on the Bill to

"take evidence and report to the House on the capacity of the proposed works to provide for fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the Channel Tunnel and the Midlands, North and Scotland and on the environmental impact of the proposals."

I do not know why the Minister did not refer to that instruction during the course of his very unenlightening speech. He may argue that section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 includes an instruction to the British Railways Board, introduced by the Opposition and accepted by the Government, that such a report be published by the end of this year. That instruction does not contradict section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, but reinforces it.

Mr. Portillo: Not so. It would duplicate it.

Mr. Snape: The Minister says, sotto voce, "Not so," that such an instruction would duplicate the Act. It would certainly clarify it. Such an instruction would at least force British Rail to come clean about their intentions and would give right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House an opportunity to make a proper and valid judgment about whether the Bill should be allowed to proceed. The Minister says that such matters should be discussed in Committee. Tonight, we are talking about —in railway parlance, appropriately enough—giving the green light in principle to a Bill that will supposedly bring

about through services to all parts of the country, yet if the Bill receives a Second Reading, the House has no way of knowing whether that happy situation will come about.

Mr. Rowe: I very strongly support the hon. Gentleman's comments. If we wait until the end of the year before we receive any coherent plan from British Rail about the proposed connections—assuming that such a thing is possible—the Bill will pass through the House of Commons before we have an opportunity to debate those proposals.

Mr. Snape: The central point of the argument is that the House is expected to pass the Bill without knowing British Rail's intentions. I have worked for British Rail all my working life, until I came here for a break. Putting aside my insults about British Rail management, I hope never to work for British Rail again. Under the new rules and regulations, I would probably be fired anyway for saying what I have tonight. It is unacceptable to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House not to receive assurances from British Rail on which we can rely. So far, we have witnessed only a series of contradictory statements, assertions and press releases.

In an earlier intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras spoke about road congestion in and around St. Pancras and King's Cross stations. Any right hon. or hon. Member who spends any time travelling around this city will know just how congested is the Marylebone road in the vicinity of those two stations—and the likely impossibility of the extra traffic likely to be generated by the scheme having free passage up and down Marylebone road and Euston road in particular and in the side streets also.

The press release from British Rail embargoed to 6 May, to which I have already referred, makes the specific statement:

"The new proposals are designed to meet all these demands"—

that is, the architectural and other demands—

"in a building of outstanding architectural merit"—

I presume that British Rail means the new concrete awning that is to be erected—

"at the same time as improving access to and from road transport."

The House has been told by the Minister that no roads surveys have yet been completed. He said, reasonably and accurately enough, that the impact of the proposals on road access and the road network has still to be measured, yet British Rail's press release presumes that its proposals will be beneficial.

Mention has been made of the proposed new terminal's advantages for the midland main line. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Acton would explain what advantages there will be for those living along the route of the midland main line. If it is not intended to electrify that line, then, given the loading gauge problems of the so-called wide lines, through trains from European cities and from cities along the midland main line are unlikely, to say the least. I have said that through trains between European cities and the western main line are at best doubtful under the somewhat nebulous proposals we have just heard about.

The support given to the Bill by hon. Members on both sides of the House is, I think, reasonable enough, provided that British Rail comes clean and tells us what it is about. I fear that, if it fails to do so—if, as it appears, it has briefed the hon. Member for Acton insufficiently, it will fail to do so—we shall be asked to give a Second Reading to a Bill that asks more questions than it answers.

I hope that at least some of those answers will be provided before midnight. If they are not, I know that many of my hon. Friends will—to say the least—have considerable misgivings about the Bill's veracity as it relates to the future of the rail network, not only in London but in Britain as a whole.

9.10 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): We have all been much entertained by the speech of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), but I am not sure that much light has been cast on the subject. I sometimes suspect that the hon. Gentleman's intention is more to confuse than to clarify. In his remarks about the management of British Rail—after all, they went back 30 years—I heard one of the most convincing arguments for BR's privatisation that I have ever heard on the Floor of the House, although it may have been advanced unwittingly and interpreted in a different context from that intended by the hon. Gentleman.

I wish to speak only briefly, on a fairly narrow aspect of the Bill. It is clear that views are divided between two camps. One view—which I deeply respect, but do not intend to comment on because I have not the necessary knowledge—concerns the immediate geographical and environmental impact of the proposals, and I understand the strength of feeling behind those arguments. Other hon. Members, among whom I count myself, are more concerned about the wider strategic implications, a concern which underlined the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister.

I am anxious that the benefits of the development of the Channel tunnel and all that goes with it should extend beyond London, and we should ask whether that development will enable international trains to run beyond London. Let me say unashamedly that my interests extend to the east coast main line link to the north-east of England and, of course, to Scotland. But it is because I believe that the benefits should extend as widely as possible that I am attracted—in principle—to the Bill: having listened carefully to what was said earlier about Stratford, I believe that the choice of King's Cross improves the chances of establishing good through links from the Channel tunnel to the north of England and to Scotland.

Mr. Chris Smith: Has the right hon. Gentleman asked British Rail how many through trains will go through King's Cross and up to Scotland? The answer, I am afraid, is, not very many.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated me. As I have said, I support the Bill in principle; obviously there is to be a second terminal in London, and I want to ensure that it is in the position most likely to facilitate the extension of links with the north and Scotland. In my judgment the Bill achieves that. I entirely agree, however, that we want rather more assurances than we have received.

I believe that the chosen site is better than others in London, and I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman anticipated me, because the question that he has asked is the next point in the notes that I have before me. It probably cannot be answered fully tonight, but, if my

[Mr. Buchanan-Smith]

support for the Bill—in principle—is to continue, I should like to know how many through trains will run to the north and Scotland. There has been a certain amount of vagueness about that.

My next point is also a general one. I shall not go into detail, as much has been said on the subject this evening, but it is equally important that there are adequate cross-London links to provide a means of connection. A good deal of long-distance passenger traffic will not use the Channel link for the whole distance. People will want to catch connecting trains to places other than the north of England and Scotland.

I understand that the total cost will be some £574 million, a huge amount for a single project, and I hope that that will not be at the expense of other British Rail programmes. There is already considerable competition for British Rail's investment. I should like to mention two aspects, one connected directly with the cross-Channel link.

If the cross-Channel link is to be successful and areas distant from the Channel are to benefit, we must ensure the development of an efficient freight terminal in Scotland. I do not want that to be put at risk by developments elsewhere. At Coatbridge, a site that I believe is being discussed as a possible major freight terminal in Scotland, we already have a freightliner terminal. Nevertheless, I believe that a great deal more study is needed, and I hope that none of that or any subsequent investment will be put in jeopardy.

Extra investment will certainly be needed. If there is a new terminal it will have to be connected, at some expense, with the trunk road and motorway systems. Let me also say to my hon. Friend the Minister—and I hope that British Rail will pay attention—that proper consideration should be given to refrigeration facilities at the terminals. The link will provide Scotland with a great opportunity, given our exports of high-quality food. There must be proper handling facilities, but as far as I know no such facilities are being considered at present.

My final point also concerns investment. The east coast route is being electrified and will shortly be completed as far as Edinburgh, but that leaves a huge gap from Edinburgh to Aberdeen. There is no doubt that Aberdeen is the oil capital of Europe: it is a very busy city and has one of the lowest unemployment levels in Scotland. The oil industry is picking up, and it will continue for many years to come.

Many of us are worried by British Rail's rejection—so far—of proposals to continue the electrification beyond Edinburgh. The investment south of London and in the Channel tunnel will be very much bigger than that north of Edinburgh. It is galling to us that additional investment should be denied to us when so much money is being spent elsewhere. Scotland believes that the links with the Channel tunnel will provide opportunities for us, but we shall be able to take advantage of them only if the links are provided in the most effective way. One of the effective ways is to have a terminal at King's Cross. However, it must not be at the expense of investment elsewhere—in particular at the expense of the two areas that I have mentioned.

9.20 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): In case anybody should be confused, let me say right at the outset that I am utterly opposed to the King's Cross Railways Bill. It directly affects my constituency and my constituents. I oppose it, too, for reasons connected with London as a whole and for national reasons.

I object most strongly to the fact that this most important transport development, which is of national strategic importance, is to be decided by means of the private Bill procedure. No other democracy in the world has anything like the private Bill procedure. It is a means whereby well-off and powerful organisations get Parliament to set them above the law of the land. In a sense, it is statutory endorsement of not obeying the law.

A major decision such as this, which will directly affect the route of the lines from the Channel tunnel to London, and possibily the lines carrying traffic beyond London, should be determined by a private Bill promoted by British Rail. It was quite clear from the few meetings that I had with British Rail about the Channel tunnel that it was incapable of organising a conspiracy; it did not have the faintest idea what it intended to do. That has become dramatically obvious, as the debate has continued, from its conflicting promises and assertions.

It is improper for a decision of this importance to be taken by a railway operating company, whether it be publicly or privately owned. That decision should be taken by the Government. God knows, this Government are happy to poke their noses into lots of things. I do not know why they are unwilling to take strategic decisions of this kind, which affect my constituency and Kent.

We need a thoroughgoing public inquiry into the proposition and into all the links proposed by British Rail. We should not proceed by means of this hole-in-the-corner set-up, known as the private Bill procedure. British Rail has used salami tactics rather than the dance of the seven veils tactics, suggested by the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn).

When British Rail first said that it intended to introduce a King's Cross Railways Bill, it said that it had nothing to do with the Channel tunnel. After the Bill was introduced, after all the rowing in Kent and after the line that it finally decided that it favoured ended up—for some extraordinary reason—at King's Cross, British Rail finally had to admit that the King's Cross Railways Bill had something to do with the Channel tunnel. Everybody had known that all along, but—lyingly—British Rail had denied it. British Rail used the fact that it is not directly connected with the Channel tunnel—so it says—to challenge objections from those who will be affected by the line to King's Cross. It is preposterous that British Rail has been permitted to proceed in this way.

British Rail has told me and my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that in the second Bill which is to be introduced it proposes to facilitate further works all the way through Kent and south-east London that will affect other land and that will lead to other purchases in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

However, British Rail is not prepared to tell us what works it intends to carry out in our constituencies. Even

this Bill does not include proper coverage of British Rail's proposals for King's Cross, let alone anywhere else. It is a preposterous approach.

The background to British Rail's approach to King's Cross-St. Pancras—that vast complex—is that 125 acres of land are surplus to railway requirements. That land is owned by British Rail or its friends—associated, or previously associated, organisations. *[Interruption.]* Yes, British Rail still has some friends, but not very many in my area.

During the time that I have been a Member of Parliament—and before that when I was on the local council—I have run all sorts of advice services; I have received representations from people who wanted land on which to build houses. I remind the House that 7,000 to 8,000 families are living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in central London and that there are 15,000 homeless families in central London. People have told me that they would like somewhere to live. Others have said that they would like more schools, and bigger schools. Children and young people have told me that they would like to have a decent athletics track in central London. Other people have said that they would like bigger clinics or another park. In all the years that I have tried to represent the area, no person has ever come to me and said, "I want an office block."

However, British Rail proposes to devote most of the surplus 125 acres to office development that nobody wants, other than an organisation whose real name ought to be Inter-Galactic Property Speculation plc, which has linked itself to British Rail with a view to making a bomb out of it and damn anyone who lives in the area and damn anyone who has got any needs in the area.

The whole object of British Rail's approach to King's Cross is to maintain as much as possible of the 125 acres of property speculation land sacrosanct and safe from any demands that may be made on it. Not content with having 125 acres for that purpose, the Bill would allow British Rail to buy another 17 acres and knock down what is on most of that land; then it would have another 17 acres for more property speculation. That is one of the motives for those proposals, and is one reason why we should not support them.

Mr. Rowe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the Confederation of British Industry has estimated that if all the office accommodation that British Rail is hoping to build on those acres is built, the effect will be to over-provide for the expected need for office space in London by nearly 5 per cent.

Mr Dobson: As my constituency contains State house, Centre Point, Euston tower and God knows where, I am quite prepared to believe that there will be a surplus of office accommodation, which we are pretty used to in my area.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, the Bill's proposals will result in 326 people losing their homes. We have enough homeless people in my area already without adding another 326. Some 59 shops and 130 small businesses will go and over 2,000 local jobs will be lost.

The purpose of the Bill is not to allow British Rail to build a wonderful station that will be a credit to Britain and will make people travelling through the Channel tunnel to London say, "What a great place London is." The purpose is to allow British Rail to build a gigantic dump of a cavern underneath the existing main line station and call it the "Euro-station".

I believe that British Rail's proposals will be dangerous. Firefighters, who have a little direct experience of King's Cross—certainly more than anyone at British Rail—believe that the new complex will be even more dangerous than the current one. It will lead to increased overcrowding. I cannot over-emphasise the fact that the Bill does not contain a single proposal for improving the shifting of passengers to and from the King's Cross-St. Pancras complex. Some improvement in the layout of the stations may be made, but British Rail is not proposing an additional tube line or extra tube trains, and I do not believe all the garbage about improved bus services.

The object of the proposed digging at King's Cross is to preserve intact surplus railway land for speculative development, which is the wrong approach. Although there are some relatively prosperous people in my constituency, as there are in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, the people living in the areas bordering King's Cross and St. Pancras are not prosperous. They already live in an area which is full of stinking fumes and much traffic noise. It is not a pleasant place to live, and British Rail's proposals will make it infinitely more unpleasant, especially while the works are going on.

Of all the proposals that affect my constituency, the one that most galls me and most typifies the cavalier attitude of British Rail is the one to destroy the Camley street nature park next to Regent's canal. The land next to the canal used to be derelict, but was transformed by the joint efforts of the Greater London council, Camden council and the London Wildlife Trust. It has a lake, study centre, birds, fish, frogs and other amphibians. It has much shrubbery and is attended by thousands of children. It is used by local schools and respected by local children. Nowhere else in the area has no vandalism, damage, graffiti or fighting. It offers the local children something that is unobtainable anywhere else in central London. It is treasured by them because it is a treasure, but British Rail wants to smash it. We often accuse young people of mindless vandalism, but British Rail's proposals are precision vandalism. It is locating the line through the nature park not because it is convenient for the railway but because it is built on land that British Rail does not own, and therefore will not prejudice the land that it intends for speculative office development.

The only reason why the Camley street nature park is to be destroyed by British Rail is to maintain intact the land it wants for its rotten, stinking, lousy, speculative office development. I do not want to hear claptrap suggesting that it is necessary to use that land, or that the park will be restored later in some grand form. We all know that we can place no value on British Rail's estimates, but its best estimate is that there will be no Camley street replacement for five years. That is one primary school lifetime for children in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. Teachers and volunteers have worked to provide the nature park, yet British Rail is prepared to destroy the park because it suits it and saves it a bit of money.

I will now move away from the narrow, parochial interests that I am proud to represent when dealing with Camley street. Let us look at the proposed station. Will it

[Mr Dobson]

be a satisfactory development? The King's Cross-St. Pancras complex is already the biggest transport interchange in Britain. It has two main line stations and the Thameslink line and, as if that was not enough, it has the Metropolitan, Circle, Northern, Victoria and Piccadilly lines. Although it is a vast complex, it is most unsatisfactory, as its users know. Every working day, about 270,000 people use the complex. The Bill proposes to add between 40,000 and 60,000 extra people to that complex from the Underground station every working day. The proposals will add to the number of users, but will not increase by an iota the capacity of the existing system to get those people away from the place to which the Euro-trains have brought them.

I speak as an open and dedicated advocate of the Channel tunnel. I have always believed that it was a good idea and should be rail based. It will be good for the country and good for the railway system, but it is crucial that it must not stop in London. I agree wholly with the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) who says that it is necessary that the links go to the north, the midlands, Scotland, the west, the south-west and Wales. It is crucial that good services are provided linking the Channel tunnel with all those places. I do not believe that the Bill will achieve that. The present proposals do not have the capacity to do what the right hon. Gentleman wants.

When I heard what British Rail was saying to hon. Members from the midlands, north and Scotland about its commitment to through connections to those parts, I drafted what I regarded as a not unreasonable instruction to the Committee. I said that the Committee should

"take evidence and report to the House on the capacity of the proposed works to provide for fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the Channel Tunnel and the Midlands, North and Scotland and on the environmental impact of the proposals."

I got in touch with the agents for the promoters, who duly got in touch with their principals—if that word, spelt in another way, can be attributed to British Rail. I asked whether they would be prepared to accept the instruction, which, after all, only instructs the Committee to check that British Rail can do what it is telling hon. Members from outside London it will do. The instruction should have been acceptable, but British Rail said that it could not accept it.

I raised the matter with the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who referred to it today. He took the matter up with British Rail and was instructed by BR —if that is how we should describe the relationship—that it still would not accept the instruction. I hope that hon. Members who represent seats in the midlands, the north or Scotland will join us in voting for the instruction to make British Rail do what it says it will do, however they vote on the Bill itself.

Mr. Tredinnick: The House will know that I represent a midlands constituency. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that schedule 1 to the Bill—containing works 01 and 02, which I understand provide for a link between the midlands main line and the new international terminal—does not, in fact, guarantee that service? My firm understanding is that they would provide that service.

Mr. Dobson: I am not a railway engineer, although some of those who have produced loony projections that they have gone back on after a couple of years have been railway engineers, so perhaps it is not such a disadvantage.

I believe that, in the end, the proposals will result in a bottleneck rather than a way through because they are not adequate to the task. But I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's point specifically, except to say that unless the midland main line is electrified I cannot envisage any possibility of British Rail laying on through trains from Milan or wherever to Leicester, Nottingham, Derby or Sheffield and I do not think that it has any plans to electrify the line at the moment. I cannot imagine that the trains will change locomotives at King's Cross, as that would be even more complicated than the present proposals.

Some of my hon. Friends—I imagine that this has also happened to Conservative Members from the north-west —have been told all sorts of wondrous stories about through connections. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) outlined how the proposals have changed, but none of the changes has been greater than that discovered by my hon. Friend the Memberfor Islington, South and Finsbury when he met the management of British Rail as recently as last Friday. My hon. Friend discovered that the through connection to the west midlands involved a travelator—I suppose that we all have a rough idea of what that might mean—from King's Cross to Euston station. That is the through connection that British Rail is contemplating for the benefit of those who live in the north-west.

I do not know where the travelator will run. It cannot run under Euston road because the Metropolitan and Circle lines run there. There are some fairly big things under St. Pancras station, which just happens to be between King's Cross and Euston. I know for a fact that the British library goes down six storeys below ground level. It will be a fairly deep travelator that gets under that. It is stupid, and entirely typical of British Rail's attitude to the proposal, that it should propose a travelator when it has not thought for 10 seconds about what route it would take.

My suggested instruction to the Committee refers to freight. Are we to have freight on the travelator as well —containers, followed by people with luggage? That is a preposterous idea. British Rail should be ashamed of itself for putting it forward.

Ms. Harman: Perhaps my hon. Friend might enlighten the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). Will refrigerated freight go along the travelator at the same time as everything else?

Mr. Dobson: That is probably going a bit too far. Perhaps some of the people who put forward loony propositions should be put in a refrigerator and allowed to cool down.

I understand, sympathise with and support the desire of hon. Members who represent the north of London for fast, reliable and frequent train connections to and from the Channel tunnel, but I do not believe that the Bill will make that possible. Because of my doubts, I hope that, at the very least, they will join Opposition Members in voting for the instruction that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and I have put down. That

is the only way of ensuring that British Rail will demonstrate to the Committee that it will do what it claims it will do.

In summary, as presently put forward, the measure will do substantial damage to the people whom I was elected to represent. It will do substantial damage to the education of many primary school children whose parents my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and I were elected to represent. *[Interruption.]* The Minister appears to think that that is not so. For their biology teaching and so on, primary schools in the area have become dependent on the Camley street nature park, which provides a facility that they cannot obtain elsewhere. Under this proposal, it will disappear for at least five years. The proposal will knock down houses, get rid of jobs, cause traffic congestion and produce a totally unsatisfactory underground welcome for anyone coming to London from abroad.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is making a good case for his constituents. What would he say to the constituents of hon. Members such as myself who represent provincial cities in the north, north-west and north-east? Would he say that the good intentions of British Rail can be tested only by the acceptance of his instruction and that, unless that instruction is accepted, the Bill should be opposed to make sure that, before it is represented to the House, the intention of the instruction is completely accepted by British Rail?

Mr. Dobson: That is certainly my position, but I would not wish to push it on those who are broadly sympathetic to the proposals.

British Rail's proposal will not provide a satisfactory station for anyone. It will lead to danger and overcrowding in the area and, as I have made clear, will not do the job that British Rail is telling people north of London that it will do in providing a proper through station that can provide a fast, frequent and reliable service to the Channel tunnel. If hon. Members feel obliged, for one reason or another, to vote for the Bill, I hope that they will join in supporting the instruction—I cannot imagine that anybody would have a logical objection to it—and at least ensure that British Rail does what it says it is attempting to do. However, as it has not done a lot of what it claims it intended to do in other aspects of the development, I do not think that we can take its word. That is why the instruction has been tabled. Anyone who takes seriously the undertakings that British Rail has been attempting to give will be able to make British Rail take those undertakings seriously only if the instruction is approved.

9.49 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It is entirely appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) who is so well-known for his attachment to that most private form of transport, the bicycle, should have been chosen to present the Bill on behalf of an organisation which, without his efforts—to some extent, I am glad to say, supported by me—would have totally eliminated all services for bicyclists.

It is important, especially as so many hon. Friends are not present tonight, to emphasise that I believe firmly in the crucial importance of spreading the benefits and the burdens of the Channel tunnel to all parts of the United Kingdom. Many hon. Members believe that to do so it is essential that the Bill be enacted in the form in which it is presented tonight. However, as we have already heard, that is by no means a necessary condition, and I shall return to that point later.

The private Bill procedure, which we have already heard graphically described by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and other hon. Members as wholly inappropriate for work on this scale, is not something that we should apply to this proposition. The whole business of striking out people who have a perfectly valid interest in the Bill by challenging their locus standi has proved to be a negation of their opportunity to make their point at the place where it matters most.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who is abroad on parliamentary business at the moment and therefore cannot be here, has asked me to emphasise on his behalf his clear understanding that his constituents feel that they have been considerably deprived of their opportunity to make their points in full by the deletion of their locus standi at the instance of British Rail.

Private Bills are a 19th century device invented to get railway Bills through quickly. It is ironic that in the 19th century the level of compensation was, in many ways, a great deal more satisfactory than anything on offer now. Again, I shall return to that later.

One of the worst features of British Rail being able to present a Bill in this way is that the Government and everyone else have no other source of advice. British Rail is the judge and jury in its own cause. When one writes as I have written to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Transport one is left with the clear impression that the only source of advice open to them comes from the very people whose action one is seeking to challenge. That is not the source of advice that anybody sensible would trust. Nevertheless, I pay tribute to both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the readiness that they have shown to see hon. Members and to discuss such issues with them at frequent intervals.

One person whom I met today in connection with this issue had had an earlier meeting with British Rail cancelled because the British Rail people he was to meet had believed that there would be a railway strike. Not only can British Rail not tell passengers where and when trains will run, it cannot even get it right when they will not be running.

I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Acton and the Minister claim that the Bill does not pre-empt a decision on the route of the high-speed link. I have been to several meetings at which British Rail has claimed that various route proposals cannot be accepted because they do not go easily into the termini that British Rail has selected. I fear that even my hon. Friend the Member for Acton, with all his wordly wisdom, has been sucked into the slough of deception of which British Rail is such a consummate master.

If, however, it is the case that the choice of King's Cross does not pre-empt a decision on the high-speed link, I believe that we should take comfort from that. That would mean, contrary to the belief that has been engendered by British Rail's behaviour throughout the country and at King's Cross, that there is time to consider alternatives. I must say that I wish that I fully believed British Rail. However, having heard it so often dismiss the alternatives,

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

I fear that British Rail wants to get the terminus built now, partly to strengthen its resistance to any suggestion that there might be alternative routes to the high-speed link.

On the question of compensation, my hon. Friend the Member for Acton explained with the clarity and honesty for which he is so well known, that British Rail intends to fund this great development principally out of planning gain. Let us not make any mistake about the fact that most of the land from which it proposes to fund the development was acquired under earlier private railway legislation. That is a matter of profound principle not just for now, but for the future. If we become active in the Euro-railway link, there will be railways built hither and yonder around the United Kingdom.

If we seriously accept the proposition that British Rail be allowed to acquire more land than it needs to build a railway—so that at some unspecified time in the future it may sell it again for speculative gain—we are in danger of doing a serious injustice to those people who—not in this case, but in other cases—will be expropriated under compulsory purchase, and who will then see the gain that they might have been allowed to make on their land stripped from them by British Rail. It might then be a private company and it would be making a profit out of land to which it would have had no access had it not been for the private Bill giving it the compulsory purchase powers. That is a matter of great concern to every hon. Member representing Kent constituencies. It should be a matter of great concern to every hon. Member in the House.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman used the words "planning gain" concerning the speculative office development in which British Rail hopes to be involved at King's Cross. Normally, a planning gain is regarded as a gain for the local community. However, British Rail is after a speculative gain which for the local community would be a planning loss.

Mr. Rowe: That is an entirely valid comment. I have already said that the very things that British Rail is hoping to build may in some cases destroy, by their sheer quantity, the very market in which it hopes to make a profit. However, that is a matter for British Rail and not for me.

I have one question to ask concerning the King's Cross Railways Bill. I understand that one of the properties under discussion is a property called "The Lighthouse", which I believe it is no longer necessary for British Rail to use for railway purposes. I had always understood that the purpose of a private Bill was to give British Rail, or the railway company, the power to purchase those things without which it would not be possible to build a railway. If, therefore, British Rail does not need The Lighthouse, I hope that it will not seek to acquire it.

We are in the worst of all possible worlds. British Rail is not a private body so when it comes to offering compensation it is constrained by rules which have been devised by the Government. At the same time the Government are leaving it severely on its own, as if it were a private concern. It is important to remember that a great deal of public anxiety over Eurotunnel operations was assuaged because Eurotunnel could offer extremely generous compensation terms to the residents of three blighted villages. As a direct consequence, many of the anxieties of those residents disappeared. British Rail is constrained to offer an ungenerous level of compensation. In Germany, 116 per cent. of the value of a property is offered. The people of King's Cross are entitled to press for that.

Will the new station be built to continental specifications? If the high-speed rail link were to come to King's Cross, would it be built to continental gauge? If so, will the other lines into King's Cross be adapted to this indispensable gauge? It is no use having through lines from John O'Groats to Brussels if they cannot carry the sort of coaches and continental gauge wagons that are needed.

Mr. Tredinnick: Can my hon. Friend tell us how much extra it would cost to install the Berne gauge system? That may be of interest. Has he made any estimates?

Mr. Rowe: There are estimates. It is reasonably simple to install the Berne gauge when building a new line or facility. One assumes that a new passenger line would be built to that gauge. So far I have had no confirmation of that most important matter.

On the freight side, British Rail's pioneering, engineering wizardry will carry us into the 21st century, competing with all the established mainland continental European countries. It will achieve that with wagon wheels a foot smaller in diameter than those that run on continental railway lines. The fact that they will wear out lines more quickly than the bigger wheels may just possibly make them unacceptable to the French, Germans and Italians. We may discover that British Rail's freight plans result in the extraordinary performance of its small-wheeled wagons going only as far as the tunnel. The freight will then have to go on continental wagons because British Rail wagons will not be acceptable on the continent. That is not a prospect that I look forward to with any great pride.

I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Acton say that an environmental impact study is being carried out on the King's Cross plan, and the Minister confirmed that. Will my hon. Friend tell us by whom it is being carried out and under what instructions? The environmental impact study on the high-speed rail link through Kent is being carried out by Environmental Resources Ltd. which has been instructed by British Rail not to consider any modifications that are not acceptable to British Rail engineers. The idea that it is in any serious sense a fully objective environmental impact study falls at the first fence.

It is clear from the way in which the King's Cross proposal has been treated that remarkably little consideration is being shown to those who will lose either their homes or livelihoods.

The question of congestion has already been covered extremely well by many hon. Members in the debate. I believe that British Rail's statistics are not to be trusted. The Waterloo development, which will not be completed until 1996, will be over capacity by the year 2000, just four years later. My constituents are fed up to the back teeth with hearing British Rail swapping statistics. Every time it produces a statistic it comes back within a week, month or year to say that it was totally and absolutely wrong, and it was ridiculous to give one figure because it did not mean it but meant something else.

Already, 80 million passengers a year travel through King's Cross. How many more passengers a year is King's

Cross expected to take? The current proposition suggests that it will be a mere 15 million. When the die is cast, how can we be sure that the number will be only 15 million? Where will British Rail go next in order to cope with the expansion? I do not trust British Rail statistics.

In addition, I do not trust British Rail costings. How does it work out its sums? In this project the costs are estimated to be nearly £575 million. Admittedly, that is less than the sum that British Rail added to its estimate for a high-speed link through my constituency when it came under pressure one weekend. In that project, nobody believes that British Rail has correctly guessed the costs.

If British Rail continues with the high-speed rail link on the line that it has chosen, it will come to a sticky end, probably somewhere under the constituency of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). It will come back and say that it is terribly sorry but that it needs another £1 billion to finish the project because it is all much more difficult than it thought.

There is an alternative. The instruction to the Committee, to which I am pleased to have added my signature, states:

"That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill to satisfy themselves that British Rail gave adequate consideration to other possible locations at King's Cross and the proposal for a station at Stratford, East before adopting the plan covered by the Works contained in Part I of Schedule 1 to the Bill."

That is a terribly important instruction, whether one votes for or against this benighted Bill tonight. It is a fundamentally proper instruction to the Committee; there is an alternative. As we have already heard, a report has been completed by Colin Buchanan and Partners, which suggests that between £500 million and £1,100 million in savings could be made available if Stratford were chosen rather than King's Cross. It is extraordinary that we should have in front of us a project that may cause costs of up to £1,100 million more than an alternative that is rejected by almost all hon. Members who have spoken and everyone who lives in the locality, while the cheaper alternative is welcomed with open arms by the local authority in whose areas it falls and by the local community. If the House votes for a Bill that adds more than £1 billion to the cost in order to locate something where it is not wanted rather than where it is wanted, we need our heads examined.

10.8 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): It seems absolutely clear to me from the debate so far that the Bill does not deserve a Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) did no more than say what was on the face of the Bill. The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) spoke against the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) explained why we should not be in favour of it, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) spoke against it, and we have just heard the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) do the same. All were wholly opposed to the Bill.

The only qualified support came from the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). Even he was concerned, since it appears that the freight that he wants to go from his constituency to the continent might have to get off at Euston and get on a travelator, and then get on at King's Cross before going to the coast, whereupon it will have to get off because the wheels are too small.

It is hard to tell whether the Minister spoke in favour of the Bill or against it. Pontius Pilate would not have been ashamed of the Minister's speech—an "it is nothing to do with me" speech. He is only the Minister for Public Transport. The Bill is only to do with the opportunities for freight to move from different parts of the country to Europe; of course that is nothing to do with him—he is only the Minister for Public Transport. The Bill is to do with passengers coming through from Europe to London and other parts of the country—the same applies. It is to do with traffic congestion in north London—that is nothing to do with him; he is only the Minister for Public Transport——

Mr. Cryer: Although the Minister may say that this has nothing to do with him, a suspiciously large number of Ministers and PPSs are here tonight. Perhaps he has arranged for a Whip to be put on the Bill so that the Government can get it through with the payroll vote. In that case, he has not told the House the whole truth.

Ms. Harman: I agree.

We understood exactly what the Minister was saying when he explained that this had nothing to do with the Government because they were not putting money into it. The Government are interested only in whether public money is put in. The strategic implications for regional policy mean nothing to the Government; nor do the transport issues, the planning issues or the blight issues.

The Government say they have gone green. The Minister told us that at some future date we shall have a half-baked environmental impact study from British Rail, but that in the meantime we might as well give the Bill a Second Reading. If that is the policy of a green Government, they must be green from mould, not from environmental concerns.

Parliament is being asked to decide on the siting of a terminal at King's Cross. We have not been allowed to see British Rail's costings or any of the evaluations of alternative terminals—or the environmental impact assessments or the engineers' reports, or anything else. This is the parliamentary equivalent of "pin the tail on the donkey". In fact, that game is a bit more scientific than what we are asked to do tonight——

Mr. Chris Smith: My hon. Friend said that we have not been able to see British Rail's costings. We have the figures given in the statement in support of the Bill, which seem to show that the cost of the proposed works at the below-ground international station will be about £456 million. That is based on the proposals for a six-platform station, but we are now told informally by British Rail that it may run to eight, rather than six, platforms, so even the costings that we have must be questioned.

Ms. Harman: I agree, and the only information that BR has provided has been corrected or revised time and again, as the hon. Member for Mid-Kent pointed out.

The British Railways Board believes that it is right for us to agree to site the terminal at King's Cross. I presume that, being members of the board, those concerned made an assessment between alternatives and that that involved challenging their officials on cost, environment, the wider

[Ms. Harman]

transport considerations, the number of homes that would be affected and what would happen in London, the rest of the south-east and elsewhere.

I also assume that before they made their decision, the members of the board were given some answers. Hon. Members in all parts of the House have been asking questions, but we have not received any answers. We asked those questions again tonight—of the hon. Member representing the promoters and of the Minister—yet we still do not have the answers. How can we agree even to do no more than rubber-stamp what British Railways Board members have decided when we do not have any of the information that they must have had before reaching their decision?

In any event, what is so secret about this information? It is not a question of national security. No criminal investigations are outstanding and must be protected. Nor is it a question of commercial confidentiality. Why cannot BR share with us the information on which its board members made their decision?

We are not receiving the facts because BR has become obsessively secret about it all. If its plans are so good and its thought processes correct, why can they not be shared with us? I suggest that it is all being kept secret because it is a botched job. Until BR is prepared to share with us its plans and let us subject them to independent scrutiny on behalf of our constituents who will be affected by those plans, we can look on what is proposed only as a back-of-an-envelope job.

When I have asked BR for this information at meetings I have been told that the whole issue must go before Parliament to be decided. I have replied, "What are you talking about? I am an MP. Don't tell me that it must go before Parliament and, because of that, I cannot see the information."

I trust that this debate will not draw to a close without the House being given an undertaking by the hon. Member for Acton, on behalf of the promoters, that hon. Members will be given this information. Indeed, I suggest that he arranges to place in the House of Commons Library all the information on which the British Railways Board made its decision.

The Minister did not explain what information he had. Indeed, he seemed to regard this lack of information as a matter of no concern to him. While he may not care to look at such documents if they are placed in the Library, many hon. Members who are concerned about the regional and economic implications of what is proposed will want to examine them, as will hon. Members who represent Kent constituencies and have spoken out against the Bill.

I hope that the *Official Report* of this debate will be circulated widely throughout my constituency and in the neighbouring marginal constituency of the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). Those whose lives, homes and businesses are already affected by what is proposed will not believe that following a debate such as we have had, the Bill received its Second Reading.

It is ludicrous for Transport Ministers to say, "We have no strategic involvement in what is proposed." My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) explained how the Secretary of State appeared before the London group of Labour Members and said, after we had referred to him deferentially as the transport authority for London and the south-east, "I am not the transport authority for this area."

We asked him who had that responsibility, and he replied. "There is no such person." That might explain the mess in which we find ourselves. We told him that if his job description did not include being strategically responsible for transport in London and the south-east, he should start accepting that task in the absence of anybody else taking it on. Unfortunately, that seemed not to be part of his consideration or that of his colleagues.

It is ludicrous that the Government have accepted British Rail's proposal to separate discussion of the terminal from discussion about the route. How do we find ourselves in a position where we have a discussion about one terminal followed by a discussion about a second terminal? One end of the Channel tunnel is appearing at the coast, yet we are told that the discussion on the route must be an entirely separate matter.

I know that we are not allowed to use visual aids in the Chamber. Perhaps it will help hon. Members, however, if I explain the map that I have drawn on a piece of House of Commons blotting paper. Mark my words, it is more sophisticated than most of the plans that British Rail has produced so far. I hope that the House will take my document seriously. I have marked King's Cross, to the west of which is Waterloo. The Channel tunnel is, of course, at the coast. In the middle is Peckham. One terminal is planned at Waterloo, with a second terminal at King's Cross. British Rail says that Peckham is the only place for the sub-surface junction.

I asked British Rail whether there was not somewhere else to place the sub-surface junction that it plans for Peckham. The answer was no. The British Rail representatives added, "There is nowhere else where we can have the two lines from King's Cross and Waterloo converging." Why is it that I am told by British Rail that I have no right to have a say and that my constituents have no interest in the Bill? I am told that I have no locus standi. I submitted a parliamentary petition as I wished to represent the interests of my constituents in the course of an opposed Private Bill Committee. I am fearful of the consequences if the Bill receives a Second Reading and four hon. Members who know nothing about engineering are given the responsibility of reaching a decision on an incredibly important issue. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, the fact that the four hon. Members have no knowledge of engineering might be an advantage. I have heard of the tradition of amateurs in this country, but this is ridiculous.

I wanted the opportunity of appearing before the Committee and calling evidence on behalf of my constituents. I wanted the opportunity of saying, "This is the wrong place to site a terminal. Look at the effect that the siting will have on my constituents." That was my modest attempt to represent my constituents.

What does British Rail do? It does not say that my petition is in the wrong form. Instead, it says that I have no locus standi and no interest. That is a disgraceful way of shutting people out of the debate. My constituents are unable to sell their houses. In one instance, two of my constituents who want to separate are obliged to continue living in their house because they cannot sell it. Various personal difficulties are arising. However, British Rail tells me that I have no interest in the Bill.

It is entirely in British Rail's discretion to allow people to make representations to the Committee. Why is British Rail so afraid that the pillars of the temple will fall down if I have the opportunity to represent my constituents and bring evidence to the Committee to show how my constituents are likely to be affected? British Rail's reaction was narrow and mean-minded. In effect, it said, "Anybody who does nt agree with us should get out of the road. We do not want to hear you."

British Rail tried to tell me that it had no option but to rule out my petition. As I have said, it challenged my locus standi. Before I became a Member of this place I used to act as a parliamentary agent. Parliamentary agents advise those who seek to oppose or promote Bills and there is a discretion whether to challenge locus standi. It is shameful that British Rail has accepted the advice of parliamentary agents with the consequence that those who are profoundly affected are told, in effect, "You have no say. Shut up and keep out of it." As the hon. Member for Mid-Kent said, if the Bill is enacted and there is a terminal at Waterloo and another at King's Cross, he, the hon. Member for Dulwich and I will tell the House, "We do not want this route." British Rail will respond, "Sorry, it is too late. Given the location of the terminals, it is the only feasible route." We will not put up with that.

I give notice that if the Bill receives its Second Reading and goes to Committee, I shall petition on behalf of my constituents again, in another place. I hope that the hon. Member for Acton will give me an undertaking today that he will urge British Rail not to challenge my locus standi. There will be an Opposed Bill Committee in another place and if, because of British Rail's disgraceful behaviour, I have missed an opportunity to represent my constituents in this House, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will ensure that I shall have an opportunity to air my constituents' grievances in the Committee in another place.

British Rail has engaged in a deliberately misleading advertising campaign that has maximised opposition to the Bill. It has made people angry and furious as well as fearful. In an advertising campaign produced by Saatchi and Saatchi, British Rail used phrases such as "temporary closure" and "some disruption." It is describing the turning of Warwick gardens in Peckham into a giant construction slum of boarded-up houses, closed roads and businesses, and empty homes that will exist for at least 10 years.

If Warwick gardens is to be the location of the sub-surface junction, it will become the site of one of the most difficult and largest civil engineering projects in the whole of London. Warwick gardens will become a giant building site. The Government talk of inner-city regeneration, but they will blight that struggling inner-city area for 10 years. British Rail say that they will grass over the site and that everything will be as it was before, but people will no longer be living in the homes they have now, and the businesses that currently exist will no longer be there either. It will take decades for that area to pick itself up off the ground.

No one in Peckham was consulted before British Rail made its decision about the sub-surface junction. No one in Peckham wants that junction at Warwick gardens, yet British Rail is keeping me, as Peckham's Member of Parliament, out of the Committee and, by refusing to divulge any of the relevant papers, it is keeping all right hon. and hon. Members blindfolded. That is disgraceful, and British Rail should not be allowed to get away with it.

British Rail could have held a public inquiry, and I do not want to hear it said that such an inquiry would take too long. The Government are expert at guillotining everything, so it should not be beyond their wits to hold a public inquiry over a limited time span. Instead, they chose to push the Bill through the House. The only alternative is guerrilla warfare, and that is exactly what the Government will get.

Mr. Dobson: Does my hon. Friend accept that she is not being individually discriminated against by British Rail? A man living in a boat on the Regent's canal in my constituency had his locus standi challenged by British Rail—yet its proposals include draining the canal where his boat is moored, which will deprive him of his home.

Ms. Harman: Parliamentary agents are required to sign a certificate of respectability, as I had to do. I do not know how the lot who are advising British Rail managed to qualify for a certificate of respectability.

I turn to the question of how passengers and freight are to be transported from the Channel tunnel to different parts of London and to the rest of the country. No one wants a road. I do not want to hear it said that we are against railways. We do not want a road, and the people of south-east London do not want passengers and freight using existing roads because the Old Kent road is chock-a-block as it is.

Instead, we want the rail link to be contained in a tunnel below London. If a tunnel can be constructed for a distance of 22 miles under the sea, and if a further tunnel can be constructed under the Thames, there is no reason why the junction has to emerge in the middle of Peckham. It seems that they have merely flown over Peckham and then said, "It's a pity about Peckham." That is simply not good enough.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend mentioned contact with other regions. Those of us who represent northern constituencies are anxious that, if the Bill is given a Second Reading, the Opposition instructions should be carried. But if the King's Cross solution is forced through—I say that advisedly, for that is what the Government will attempt to do—the problems will not be solved.

I have just received from British Rail a note of a meeting that it held with Members of both Houses, which says:

> "The London Midland Region is well positioned for Channel Tunnel traffic as it already had a route around London and Willesden to Clapham via Kensington. This route is to be electrified to enable easy transfer."

If British Rail believes that that is the way to give the north and north-west the contact with Europe that they need, it is disgraceful and shows that BR still has not got it right in the Bill.

Ms. Harman: I urge all my hon. Friends from different regions to vote against Second Reading. I understand that we must vote on Second Reading before we vote on the instructions; if it were the other way round and we could vote on the instructions first, as a sort of amendment, we might be able to vote for the instructions and then, if they were passed, for Second Reading. I hope that those who, like me, are afraid that the instructions may not be passed —and without them the whole exercise is a farce—will vote against Second Reading. I also hope that those who

[Ms. Harman]

support the Bill in principle, such as the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside, will in any event vote in favour of the instructions.

Let me ask a question that all my constituents, and those in neighbouring constituencies, are asking: who are the villains of the piece? British Rail stands accused of incompetence—there can be no doubt of that—but I think that the Government are the real villains. They have said that British Rail must make a profit, and everything else comes second—the regional implications, the implications for the environment and the implications for homes and traffic. British Rail must make a profit and account for it to the Government; as long as that is done the Government are not interested in anything else.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Are not the real villains of the piece the narrow-minded interests in the London community who want to shut out what will be a very important development for us in the north? Many people in the north want to make the best possible use of Europe after 1992. Here is a golden opportunity for them to develop a direct rail link with the Channel tunnel, with all the opportunities that that in turn involves, but all that we have heard from the hon. Lady is a disgraceful speech about the narrow interests of the people of Peckham.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was both ignorant and offensive. He has not heard the speeches opposing Second Reading ; he has simply drifted into the Chamber. He has clearly not read the Order Paper either. Let me remind him that one of the instructions, which I support, proposes

"an Instruction to the Committee . . . that they shall take evidence and report to the House on the capacity of the proposed works to provide for fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the Channel Tunnel and the Midlands, North and Scotland"—

and, no doubt, even Stockton.

I did not wish to repeat what my hon. Friends have said, but I said at the outset of my speech that I supported them. I have not yet got into the habit that many hon. Members have acquired of repeating each other's remarks over and over again; I have sought to represent my constituents. But I think that I have taken too much time in replying to the hon. Member for Stockton (Mr. Devlin), whose comment was obviously frivolous and not worth answering.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) has only recently come into the Chamber. He made a disgraceful comment about my hon. Friend's speech. It is clear that he has not heard of the massive destruction of homes, jobs and livelihoods and of the destruction of an entire neighbourhood that the Bill will bring about. I do not call narrow-minded the opposition of those who live in the area and whose lives will be profoundly affected by the Bill.

Ms. Harman: I agree with my hon. Friend.

I have already said that the villains of the piece are British Rail for incompetence and the Government for caring only about profit, not about wider transport considerations and people. We know who the victims of the Bill will be. They will be people in Kent, south-east London, King's Cross, Wales, the north, Scotland and the south-west who are hoping that the Channel tunnel will spell economic regeneration for those areas. I hope that the House will vote against the Bill. If, by any chance, it is given a Second Reading, I implore hon. Members to vote for both the instructions that stand in my name and those of my hon. Friends and of Conservative Members.

10.35 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I have listened very carefully for some hours to the arguments on both sides, because I understand the strength of feeling. However, I return to my original belief that anyone who genuinely believes in the regional development of this country and who wants the north to have a fair share in the economic prosperity of the nation must enthusiastically support the Bill.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the instruction?

Mr. Amos: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will hang on and allow me to develop my argument. Then I shall give way to him.

As a north-eastern Member of Parliament, I see 1992 and the Channel tunnel as golden opportunities and as an exciting development for my constituents in Hexham and elsewhere in the north-east. For the first time ever in history, they will be nearer to the centre, the heart of continental Europe. However, there is a real danger that resources and attention will shift to the centre unless there is access to the regions and unless that access is made as easy as possible. A direct through rail link between the north-east and the Channel tunnel is essential. With adequate capacity, it could meet what I believe will be a significant growth in both passenger and freight traffic in the foreseeable future—far in excess of anything that is currently being predicted.

With its connections to the north-east, only King's Cross, in my opinion, will provide that vital link. I believe that that view is held almost unanimously in the north-east. The establishment of a second international terminal at King's Cross will eventually link cities such as Newcastle and Naples. I hope that eventually it will link cities and towns such as Hamburg and Hexham.

King's Cross will provide a convenient and modern interchange between international through services and a vast array of domestic rail and Underground services, linking the continent, central London and Britain's regions. I echo the words of the Northern Region Councils Association which says that King's Cross is fundamentally important to the northern region. It continues:

"Unless this and other . . . decisions are taken, the regions face the prospect of the Thames replacing the Channel as a barrier to trade with Europe."

The Northern Region CBI also says that a terminal at King's Cross will have

"an important bearing on the future prospects of the Region."

I am afraid that one is closing one's eyes if one does not honestly believe that people in the north-east regard the link at King's Cross as vital to that region.

Mr. Dobson: In view of the hon. Gentleman's obvious and sensible commitment to fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the north-east and the Channel tunnel, does he intend to support the instruction? All we are asking British Rail to do in the instruction is to prove what it claims it is trying to do.

Mr. Amos: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I shall answer him in my concluding remarks.

Mr. Devlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) recently visited my region to tell us how awful it was? He said that it was unemployed and being run down continuously. He caused grave offence to many people in the region, who regarded him as a London Member of Parliament who had visited the area merely to tell us bad things about the north-east. When my hon. Friend frames his reply to the hon. Gentleman, he should bear in mind the fact that the hon. Gentleman is no friend of the north-east, and nor is the Labour party.

Mr. Amos: I am sure that once the hon. Gentleman has listened to my comments he will be better informed of my opinions and about the north-east.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Amos: May I continue? I must get on.

Apart from the significant short-term and other advantages in the choice of King's Cross, such as a more frequent Thameslink service connecting Gatwick airport, I am mostly concerned about the Bill's effect on the north-east. It will be an inexplicable tragedy with far-reaching consequences if the Bill is not given a Second Reading. The new international terminal will be linked to a new terminal building connecting main line King's Cross and St. Pancras. International trains will run between the north-east and Scotland to the heart of continental Europe on the continental rail network. There will be easy interchanges between other international trains and InterCity services on the east coast main line, which will be entirely electrified to Newcastle and beyond by 1991.

In addition, passengers from the north-east will have improved services from King's Cross on Network SouthEast to Bedford, Brighton and King's Lynn, linking the home counties and beyond, and also from St. Pancras to the east midlands. We are talking about not only better through services but better connecting services from King's Cross, with the interchange network that it will create. My constituents, who have as much interest in where the terminal is based as anyone else, will benefit from better international and domestic travel arrangements. Two new approach tracks—on the east coast main line north of King's Cross and a link between the east coast main line and St. Pancras—will combine to provide travellers with a wider range of services.

British Rail is under an obligation to make its scheme commercially justifiable, and we accept that. It must consider demand for its service at King's Cross compared with alternative sites. We are told—the figure may or may not be correct—that three quarters of passenger demand for international passenger services is forecast to arise in London and the south-east. That means that at least a quarter—I suspect that it will be more—of the demand will be from the regions. It is therefore essential that any terminal is located where routes from the regions and London and the south-east best converge and where it can be facilitated with the least congestion.

That involves a number of requirements. First, there must be quick, regular access to central London by the Underground, bus, taxi and car. Secondly, there must be access for through trains to the north and beyond. Thirdly, there must be frequent and reliable connections to local InterCity services to destinations not served by through routes—the onward journeys to which I referred.

The advantages of King's Cross are way ahead of any alternative, such as access to central London. It is served by five Underground lines, and there are many bus services. I am prepared to accept that no road in London

[Mr. Amos]

is not already over-congested, but it is adjacent to a wide and major road. It is already one of the best terminals for onward travel.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the hon. Gentleman rushes past the subject with a two-second jab at London's traffic jams, I must ask him whether he realises that London's traffic problems are horrendous. Those of us who represent constituencies to the north of King's Cross are concerned that, if only 15 per cent. of passengers travel to and from King's Cross station by car, the congestion up to the M1 will be quite intolerable.

His dismissive attitude to London's traffic does the hon. Gentleman no good at all. He should recognise that siting the terminal at King's Cross will create impossible congestion on the road system of north London. The people of north London do not want any more roads. They are opposed to more road building, and they believe that traffic should be sent round London and that railways rather than the ludicrous development the hon. Gentleman appears to support should be encouraged.

Mr. Amos: The hon. Gentleman has raised some interesting points, which can be easily shot down. It is absurd to say that the people of London do not want extra roads. I live in London from Monday to Thursday, and I want extra roads. The hon. Gentleman talked about congestion in London. This afternoon I went for a test drive with autoguide. That is a way forward, and I hope that Opposition Members will not oppose it in Committee. The hon. Gentleman said that the terminal would create more congestion and should be opposed on that basis alone. That is to put his head in the sand. The answer is to find ways to relieve the congestion, not to say that we do not want a terminal there because it will cause congestion.

Mr. Corbyn: Why King's Cross?

Mr. Amos: It will cause less congestion than the alternatives which I shall outline; I am giving reasons for the choice of King's Cross. King's Cross, as I have said, is linked with five Underground lines. Stratford, the only alternative, is linked to one. It is idle and incorrect to assume that, as soon as someone arrives at King's Cross, he will get into his car and travel north. Many passengers will take the Underground and go west to the hotel district or Heathrow, or take InterCity trains to Newcastle.

Mr. Tredinnick: Although my hon. Friend has sat throughout the whole debate, it is notable that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has spent little time in the Chamber. Perhaps he should have spent some time in the Chamber if he is going to challenge my hon. Friend.

Mr. Amos: My hon. Friend is right.

My other point was that, in assessing the viability of King's Cross, we should assess its access for through trains and connecting trains. King's Cross is one of the best termini for onward travel, whether for London to the south-east and East Anglia, to the north-east and Scotland, for the Thameslink to the south coast or for connections to the east midlands via St. Pancras. King's Cross will further establish the principle of the practical possibility of more through London services.

This project is of national and international importance and we must consider it in that context. Stratford is not a serious or realistic alternative. All the criteria to which I have referred would be met badly if Stratford were to be chosen. Access to central London is via one Underground line—the Central line—and it is absurd even to suggest the possibility of passengers coming under the Channel, destined for central London, having to arrive in outer London at Stratford to come back into central London for hotels or onward arrangements. Stratford has one Tube line, which is already overloaded.

There are other ways into central London, such as by taxi, but it is over five miles from Stratford. Are we seriously suggesting that people should have to pay for an expensive taxi journey into central London? Most people, of course, will be going not to central London but to west London—either to Heathrow or the hotel district—so one is talking about expensive taxi rides, which would be the only way into central London. Access to other destinations is the other criterion by which Stratford should be judged. Stratford is no good for the regions. The rail station at Stratford, which I use occasionally, is geared to East Anglia and to nowhere else. I do not see why the northern region should be second best when considering this major terminal.

Let us accept that, if we want a second international terminal, it must be at King's Cross. King's Cross provides direct onward travel to Heathrow and Gatwick airports. It is significant that no hon. Member this evening has mentioned the onward travel arrangements from this terminal. It is fairly obvious that many passengers will want to go on to Heathrow and Gatwick. King's Cross is well placed for that because it is on the Piccadilly line to Heathrow and directly linked to Victoria station for Gatwick. The InterCity network is excellent. Network South-East is ideal——

Mr. Dunn: No, it is not.

Mr. Amos: It is ideal for other smaller towns, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) well knows. King's Cross is ideally placed.

We are talking about a project that would link captial cities, and hon. Members should bear in mind that international dimension. I recently attended a meeting with the French side of Eurotunnel and I was amazed and impressed to discover how quickly and enthusiastically it was getting on with providing access to, and onward travel from, the Channel tunnel.

In King's Cross we have a site that already meets the necessary and reasonable requirements of an international terminal. Because of its poor location and accessibility, Stratford would not be used by passengers; it would be shunned by them and they would go to Waterloo or elsewhere instead. Stratford simply cannot meet the requirements of passengers travelling to central London or beyond.

Mr. Pike: If the hon. Gentleman is so confident about the regions, why is he not prepared to support the instruction in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), which would serve only to prove the case? Let us have it in the open; let him support that instruction.

Mr. Amos: Hon. Members may not have been listening, but I have been giving clear, and I believe logical, reasons

why I support the proposal to locate the terminus at King's Cross. In a few minutes I shall say why I want us to stop shilly-shallying and finding all sorts of reasons why we should not go ahead with the project. We should get on with it.

Mr. Dobson: My terminus right or wrong.

Mr. Amos: The hon. Member should be more reasonable. I may disagree with him, but at least I have given reasons why I think King's Cross is the terminus to choose.

If King's Cross is chosen, the terminus for travellers from the north-east will become a much less unhygienic and unsavoury place in which to arrive and from which to depart. At the moment, King's Cross is not a very nice station for my constituents to arrive at or leave from, but once the interchange network is established and built, as I hope it will be, there will be tremendous improvements at King's Cross.

Mr. Dobson: Has the hon. Gentleman noted that, according to the lowest estimate, 60,000 extra people will be using the station each day? Will that improve the facilities?

Mr. Amos: The detailed plans and design provide for more capacity, and the station will be cleaner and more modern. It will not be the present station slightly enlarged; it will be a different station—a whole new complex. The hon. Gentleman must extend his horizons, rather than thinking only of all the negative factors. If we say that we do not want King's Cross to be the site, we shall be back to square one and the hon. Gentleman and his constituents will be the first to complain that in comparison with the French terminus ours is inadequate and dirty. The new King's Cross will be cleaner and more modern and it will have new shops and restaurants. That is what we are trying to build, and the hon. Gentleman should support us.

Mr. Dobson: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman has not followed the argument mounted by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and myself. Our view is that, if the station is to be at King's Cross, it should occupy the 125 acres of land behind the present King's Cross station, on which a magnificent Eurostation could be built. What we object to is the idea of digging a dump under the existing station, which is what the Bill proposes.

Mr. Amos: That is another example of narrow thinking. The hon. Gentleman has his head in the sand. He talks about a "dump" underground. He must go to Paris and see the underground dump there. The French have linked their rail network. It is underground, in the centre of the capital city. It does not have to be a dump. The hon. Gentleman should extend his horizons.

Opposition Members have constantly referred to British Rail's land which it may want to sell. I do not blame it for that. The land belongs to British Rail. It must make a commercial decision. If selling the land helps it to produce the new interchange that will be convenient for my constituents, I will happily support it. Hon. Members cannot criticise British Rail for wanting to sell land that it does not need. It can build a good interchange underneath the city, just as there is in Paris—which works. I suggest that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras should see it.

Let us ignore the NIMBY syndrome in certain vested interests and build Europe's largest transport interchange. The one in Paris proves that such a project is possible. Of course I accept the reservations about architectural changes. It is up to the Bill to take them into account. In return for our faith in British Rail's and London Underground's project, Conservative Members expect from British Rail a much better, more frequent, reliable and punctual service. We expect also a station that is clean and has adequate seating, shops and places to eat. Above all, we expect enough free trolleys for international passengers arriving with heavy luggage.

I note that one fifth of the expenditure on the project will be undertaken by London Underground. It is incumbent upon London Underground not again to let down the people of London and of the whole country by bad management, poor planning, unreliable service and a totally unsatisfactory network.

I agree that, if more passengers are to use King's Cross, there must be not only more ticket halls and subways but more trains to take passengers. We will not solve the problem by opposing the Bill. We must get on to London Underground and make sure that it honours its obligations to the people of London. It has not done so in the past 10 years. It has been a disgrace.

I hope that the Bill is given a Second Reading. I regret that no Opposition Member from the north-east has been present to support the measure. *[Interruption.]* I inform Opposition Members who have been sniggering for the past few minutes that the people of the north-east have as much interest in the second terminal as the people of London have. It is facetious of Opposition Members to snigger at the concept that the hon. Member for Hexham, which is 300 miles from London, does not have as much interest in the second terminal as they have. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), who again is sniggering, has advanced no reason why Stratford is better than King's Cross. He has not told the House why it is more convenient to get into central London from Stratford or how the people from Hexham or the north-east in general can get from Stratford to their region and to Scotland. It is a disgrace that no Opposition Member has supported the King's Cross terminal.

10.58 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Unfortunately, hon. Members have seen one of the recurring characteristics of the Government—their ability to convert a golden opportunity and a one-off chance to a near disaster. That is particularly evident when history has delivered the Government a chance which will not occur again in hon. Members' lifetimes. North sea oil has been frittered away. There will be no other chance of that nature. The same applies to the Channel tunnel. The opportunity is unrepeatable, certainly in our lifetimes, and probably for many lifetimes to come. Unless the right decisions are taken, the Channel tunnel will become a dead end, especially for the people of my region. It appears that again tonight, at the Government's behest, British Rail is frittering away the chance to create further economic expansion and further bonuses in the east midlands. That is a great tragedy for the people of my constituency, my town, my shire and the east midlands as a whole.

As many of my hon. Friends have pointed out, British Rail appears to be botching along. It is making its policy

[Mr. Graham Allen]

up as it goes along, and is using piecemeal decision making rather than referring to any overall strategy or real planning. However, I for one do not blame British Rail for that because it is working within the constraints that have been set by Government. It is not its direct responsibility that this piecemeal operation is taking place. It is the restrictions placed on British Rail and the fact that it is not allowed to continue with strategic planning that has led it into this position. I refer to the financial constraints, the refusal to have a national strategy for transport and the refusal to plan properly so that British Rail can take long-term investment decisions rather than these short-term, botched decisions just to make its return on capital.

All those things would become evident if proper scrutiny were given to the Bill and that is the one thing that can be avoided by the use of the private Bill procedure. There cannot be a proper, full public inquiry so that all points of view can be aired, whether about the Stratford interchange, electrification or the type of locomotive power to be used. None of those broader issues, including, above all the strategic implications of the Channel tunnel to 1992, can be assessed through the private Bill procedure. The procedure is an anachronism; it is wrong; and the sooner that it is done away with, either by this Government or by the next Labour Government, the better. This matter deserves to go to a full public inquiry so that every facet of the issue can be examined in the full light of publicity. Unfortunately, that will not take place.

Like many colleagues in the House, I have received representations from several quarters. One fascinating thing about this issue is that representations have not just come from the trade unions, from the chambers of commerce, from only Labour or only Conservative Members—they have come from across the whole spectrum. Typical of those representations is one that I have received from the leader of Nottinghamshire county council, which states:

"Local interests may not be able to put their own case fully, as they would at a local inquiry."

The fact that this procedure is being used makes this episode a shameful one that will return to haunt Governments of any political complexion over the next 30 years. The erroneous decision to go ahead with these proposals for King's Cross without a strategic network or an overall planning framework will live with us for many years to come.

It is the Government's imposition of unrealistic and short-term financial targets on British Rail that has produced the investment decisions, or rather the lack of long-term investment decisions, that are characterised in the proposal that we are considering tonight. The way in which the railway system in Britain has been neglected means that there is a strong argument for saying that a catching-up programme is now required.

British Rail receives £800 million, or thereabouts, in support from Government; in France, the figure is £1,800 million and in West Germany the figure is £4,500 million. Over the past decade the neglect and hostility to investing in anything in public ownership, such as British Rail, has overtly or covertly sought to make railways in this country fail. That misdemeanour must now be rectified if Britain is to become an equal partner in Europe. The east midlands, above all, cannot afford to mortgage its future by allowing short-sightedness and dogmatic hostility to rule investment in public utilities.

Britain has planned to spend £500 million to include not only the route infrastructure, but the cost of a new London terminal. The French have budgeted about £1,200 million for their high-speed line to the tunnel, which does not include the ring route around Paris, and does not take into account their other investments in rolling stock, new lines to Lyon and the Atlantic line. Our investment in Britain must at least match that of the French, because our market potential is five times greater than theirs.

I, like many other hon. Members, in response to inquiries, have received a letter from Sir Bob Reid, the British Railways Board chairman, in which he has underlined the uncertainty of British Rail's investment framework. Because it cannot invest long term, it cannot make strategic decisions. It is caught in the chicken and egg situation. It wishes the initial demand to come from businesses, which say that they need, for example, a terminal or a goods yard, but businesses are looking to British Rail to provide facilities and, therefore, stimulate demand.

That uncertainty is typified in Sir Bob Reid's letter, where he says:

"any scheme is only likely to work if there is adequate demand from freight forwarders to justify the terminal and the service, and if the terminal can be financed as a joint venture project with local authorities and developers".

Each side waits for the other to move. Without that essential overall planning framework, there is stalemate and a King's Cross terminal will be built without the investment that is so essential to the east midlands region.

Another strange example of the poor investment decisions is the King's Cross surplus railway land. I understand that, because of the high return required on capital, British Rail, instead of using that vast amount of land that is at the side of the tracks on which to build the interchange, is keeping aside that land to profit from speculative office building and will then go to the great expense of building underground. That is madness. Anyone coming into St. Pancras or King's Cross can see those 125 acres of unused land. Those acres are being put aside instead of being used for the ideal location of an overground interchange. I believe that British Rail is doing that rather than having a long-term overview and providing an extensive network of interchange lines and platforms on that land, because it needs to make the money on the land sale to meet the rates of return set by the Government.

At present every British Rail proposal must be judged by narrow commercial criteria set by the Government—including a 7 per cent. financial rate of return. It was on those grounds that British Rail refused to consider electrification of the midland main line before the end of the century. The Channel Tunnel Act 1987 makes the position far worse, in that it reinforces the criteria and states that any facilities or services provided by British Rail must adhere to the commercial remit. The Government do not consider relevant social need, public interest, environmental consideration or relief of road and air congestion. Yet in France—our nearest continental neighbour—the Government's criteria for investment decisions include all those aforementioned factors. That would appear to be not only sensible, but essential.

The commercial interests in the east midlands also reject the Government's approach. The regional chamber of commerce has called for substantial public investment in infrastructure to provide access for our region to the tunnel. I am pleased to say that several regional Conservative Members also strongly support that contention.

Local authorities of all political colours are actively trying to attract national and international investment into the region on the basis of its excellent communications. That will be a hollow joke as traffic goes up the west and east coast lines. The starting point for improved rail communications must be a complete rejection of the narrow accounting practices in favour of a national economic approach to regenerate our area and other areas.

A once-in-a-century project, such as the channel tunnel, requires planning. It is planning that is anathema to the Government. That ideological refusal to consider planning, even in this context, is a major reason why the east midlands may end up being on the receiving end of an economic disaster. We need a package which does not just pick up individual items piecemeal, but which includes a view about industrial regeneration in all our manufacturing, services and other economic sectors. We have to tie in the infrastructure with that sort of economic overview. That means the direction and location of jobs, wherever the lines that will benefit from the Channel tunnel and 1992 will lead. To ignore that is to ignore the basic responsibilities of Government. The package must be for the United Kingdom as a whole—not merely for the south-east, but for all regions. Above all, the package must include the east midlands.

The east midlands will be bypassed by the proposed developments. To ensure that we are not bypassed and that our region does not become piggy in the middle and an economic backwater, we need electrification of the midland main line. A business man in Rome, or perhaps even Moscow or Brussels, will examine the rail map before he makes his long-term freighting, commercial or investment decisions. If the east or west coast lines are electrified and the midland main line is not, it may be an important consideration in deciding where to locate and ship to, and where passenger traffic goes. Even if it is merely a matter of status that the east midlands is not electrified and other regions are, it could have an immense knock-on effect on the economic viability of our area.

I understand that the east midlands line is not to be electrified. The Bill will have a detrimental effect unless we can campaign across party lines to ensure that the line is electrified. I have a letter from Mr. Kirkby, the vice-chairman of the British Railways Board, who states clearly:

"it will not be possible to run day trains beyond the electrified network, as we will have to use permanently coupled electric trains, specially designed to meet the exacting specifications of the Channel Tunnel and the high speed links on either side."

That is Mr. Kirkby's view and, other than his chairman, there is no one higher on the British Railways Board. If that is to be the case, a large amount of through traffic will not have the option of entering Nottingham and the other stations along the line in the east midlands, which would be a tragedy.

Mr. Devlin: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman feels, as I do, that the cause of regional development is good and worthy of support. Is not that the reason why it is important that the main terminal should be built at King's Cross, which is on the main east coast line? The only alternative that has been put forward is Stratford which, as he knows, is not connected to the main east coast line. Would he also accept that King's Cross is next to St. Pancras which serves Nottingham? Would he further accept that the east coast main line, which I travel up and down on most weeks, has a train station at Grantham, which is not far away from the area that he represents?

Mr. Allen: The King's Cross option is the one that I and many people in the east midlands favour. However, it is only fair and apposite to consider all options. Unfortunately, if the instruction is not carried tonight we shall be merely rubber stamping a decision that should have been taken under full public analysis. I want to present a case to a public inquiry or to a committee showing why King's Cross is right and other options are not. I would like county councils, city councils, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and so on, to have that option which will be denied us tonight.

The difficulty about merely the east coast line being electrified is that if one has the option of continuing up the east coast line rather than getting off at Grantham and catching a Sprinter across, investment will probably be made along that line rather than in other areas. That is a matter of great concern to Members involved in the east midlands from both sides of the House.

The other reason that I would stress that we need a package for the east midlands rather than merely a super station at King's Cross is so that we can also benefit from the international freight traffic that will arise from the Channel tunnel and, particularly, from 1992. As they currently stand, the proposals for an international freight depot are dubious. British Rail is waiting for the demand from business and business is waiting for some indication from British Rail that it is serious about an international freight depot in the west midlands, at Toton, near Nottingham.

Unfortunately, such a chicken and egg situation is not viable. If one is planning long term, there must be clarity about how all the factors will fit together. For example, in France, there are already plans for 240 freight yards, all with direct access to the tunnel. Perhaps the Minister will say how many freight yards are planned for the United Kingdom—probably no more than a handful with direct access to the tunnel.

Mr. Cryer: Is the drift of my hon. Friend's remarks that those hon. Members representing provincial areas should vote against the Bill unless British Rail accept the instruction which makes it absolutely clear that the Committee should investigate the necessity of the

"capacity of the proposed works to provide for fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the Channel Tunnel and the Midlands, North and Scotland"?

Is he saying that unless this instruction is carried—so far, British Rail has refused to accept it—the scheme may become so congested that it will be of no benefit to constituents in the east midlands, Bradford, Leeds and the north-east?

Mr. Allen: Voting for the King's Cross proposal as a trigger for economic development may well prove to be the trigger of the gun that shoots industry and commerce through the head in the east midlands. None the less, an international interchange is an essential prerequisite for further development. We need one, wherever it is to be

[Mr. Allen]

located. Only then shall we ensure that the traffic generated by our trading links through the tunnel with the European community is directed where we think it appropriate. The problem is that there is no serious strategy on where international passenger and freight traffic should go. I endorse what my hon. Friend said about that.

Rail freight becomes competitive with road freight at about 250 miles distance between collection and delivery. That distance will become unexceptional after 1992 and free movement within the EEC. The present plans seem deliberately designed to remove that competitive edge by inserting unnecessary delays and excursions. The east midlands, particularly, will be trapped between the two bows of the electrified east and west coast lines.

Economic development in this country requires long-term investment. It will not happen of its own accord. The Government are happy to let this Bill go through without having thought about it or taken evidence from the parties concerned; they seem content not to invest in an east midlands rail link or to provide long term planning for the freight terminal at Toton which everyone wants.

The Government can bribe Kent with £500 million to placate the electorate's environmental worries, but when the lifeblood of the east midlands is at stake, and a mere £100 million would electrify the line from St. Pancras up through the east midlands, the Government are not prepared to invest the money. It would be recouped many times over. The Government are being hypocritical and deceitful, and the Bill is inadequate.

The east midlands is united on this as I have never seen it united before. Across parties and industrial divides, from Nottingham to Loughborough, Mansfield, Leicester, Derby, Market Harborough, Kettering, Wellingborough —all are united in supporting an electrified east midlands line and in wanting serious long-term planning and investment decisions from the Government for the international freight terminus.

I hope that this consensus will make the Government see sense and allow British Rail to plan for its long-term future. That will enable us to recoup some of the losses that this Bill will create. Without such a change of heart, the east midlands will not benefit, and the Channel tunnel and the link through to London will become one more in the series of great lost opportunities during the Government's time in office.

11.24 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): After listening to the debate for over four hours, I was becoming concerned at the way in which few Opposition Members appeared to be in favour of the railways. Indeed, only the hon. Members for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) advanced arguments in favour of the railways. That is regrettable, because the lifeblood of the future of the nation depends on the railways, which should be receiving much more support, particularly from north country members.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The thrust of our remarks is that my hon. Friends and I support the railways, that we recognise the vital necessity of a good rail system for the future of the country and that we recognise the necessity of having a railway network which benefits more than London and the south-east. We say to British Rail when we ask for electrification from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, "Do not give us pie in the sky stories about the viability of the link between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. What about the viability of the whole line?" I hope that those who are listening to the debate will prevail on BR to publish the figures on which it decided on the viability of the line from London to Edinburgh.

Mr. Thorne: I am grateful for that reassurance and I hope that when the terminal is built in London—which I hope will be at King's Cross—it will receive proper praise from hon. Members who represent north country constituencies.

British Rail has been unfairly criticised for using the private Bill procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said that the House was not being asked to approve the redevelopment scheme but only the railway works listed in the Bill; that planning permission was being sought by the developer from the local authority for the redevelopment itself in the normal way.

That procedure has existed for a long time. In fact, a number of substantial buildings were erected in this area last century to make provision for the railways that were then in course of construction. Indeed, the third largest party in the House is occupying one of those buildings as its headquarters in Cowley street. It was built especially for the parliamentary work of one of the railway companies, and that was typical of all railway companies last century. So we are talking of a procedure that is well established and one which BR could not avoid. In other words, BR has done exactly what was required of it, and it is unfair for hon. Members to be critical.

I was interested to hear what the three hon. Members who represent Newham constituencies said about the desirability of locating the terminus in their area, and, as constituency Members, it was their job to do that. Having examined the matter closely, I find the principle of locating the terminus at Stratford to be flawed. It would have been of some advantage to my constituency in the neighbouring borough of Redbridge if it were to be located there, but it would still be the wrong location because it would not help passengers; nor would it help people in transmitting between the north country and the centre of London.

In the past there have been substantial goods facilities at Stratford and at one time they included a large cattle facility. As a result, there is a lot of space there which I am sure Newham borough council would have liked to use for this purpose. But it would be the wrong location.

Safety and traffic growth are two of the important issues we have to consider, and the King's Cross area requires immediate attention on both counts. We had that awful tragedy in the Underground at King's Cross and hon. Members have spoken about the number of lines that converge at that point. The House must not simply pay lip service to safety, as we tend to do when such tragedies occur. We must see that action is taken to put matters right. That tragedy is one reason why this project has had to be brought forward as a matter of urgency, regardless of what happens to the remainder of the terminal.

Other opportunities must be explored. I find it greatly encouraging that the growth in use of the railways has been so considerable in recent years that many facilities are now saturated. That means that we must deal quickly with the matters that are before us.

Many of us have had the opportunity to see what has been done in other major terminals, such as Paris and Washington. We have seen what has been achieved at major terminals throughout the world. There are good opportunities for development at main line railway stations. We can see what has been done at Victoria and what is being done at Liverpool Street. Those who travel to London from the north-east could benefit by having a much better facility at King's Cross.

Finally, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport seriously to consider compensation. Projects of the sort that we are discussing involve considerable investment—£500 million has been mentioned—and we must ensure that those whose lives are turned upside down by the implementation of proposals that are made for the benefit of society generally are more than adequately compensated for any annoyance and inconvenience that they suffer. Many other countries recognise that people who have been living in a certain property for the whole of their lives—perhaps 60 or 70 years—do not take kindly to being uprooted and thrown out.

We tend to hedge our compensation with many rules and regulations that provide a little more here and there for curtains and carpets, telephone connection, surveyors' fees and legal costs, for example, when we should adopt a much more robust and helpful approach to ensure that the sting is taken out of enforced moves and other annoyance and inconvenience. I should like to see the Department of Transport releasing bodies such as British Rail from the constraints to which they are subject. They are not allowed to proceed beyond the stringent rules laid down, because the Treasury is terrified that that might raise the cost of future projects. I can assure the Treasury that the cost of those projects would be reduced if the present constraints were lifted because completion would be much quicker. There would be much less hassle if opposition and resentment were not stirred up in every direction. Compensation should be considered much more sympathetically, and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take that into account.

11.34 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Some hon. Members have spoken at almost interminable length about many issues that have relatively little to do with King's Cross. I shall attempt to speak succinctly about King's Cross and especially of what the proposed development would mean for the north of England.

Many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), have spoken about what they described as the largest interchange in Europe. What we have at present is not an interchange. We have King's Cross, St. Pancras and Thameslink, and the links between them are extremely poor and inconvenient for passengers. The proposal that we are considering is based on an imaginative concept. It will cost many hundreds of millions of pounds, but it is one that we should support.

The new King's Cross can become the gateway to the north. I believe that it will be built and that those who now oppose the development will be seen to have had their heads in the sand.

An interchange must provide not only for people travelling from the furthest corners of the country but for Londoners and those who commute to London. The capital's transport infrastructure suffers greatly from the large number of termini that are a consequence of the development of railway companies in the last century. There is now an opportunity to combine two of those termini into something that can be a great future asset.

It has been said that the procedure adopted for the Bill is an inadequate substitute for a proper planning inquiry, but that procedure is appropriate for a project having a national dimension—which the future of King's Cross clearly has. There is nothing unusual or irregular about adopting the private Bill procedure, which permits the construction of railway works in just the same way as the many railway Bills brought to Parliament in the past.

As has already been pointed out, an application for outline planning consent to construct the above-ground complex has been submitted to Camden council. I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister concerning clause 19, which will provide an adequate safeguard.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) mentioned traffic problems. The Bill provides an opportunity to ease many of them. Other hon. Members spoke of the existing level of congestion affecting rail passengers, especially commuters. However, the better facilities and easier access to trains that the Bill permits are bound to be welcomed by them.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waller: I have very little time left, and I know that one of my hon. Friends wishes to intervene.

The north favours King's Cross as a second terminal. I say that confidently, knowing that all sides of industry —chambers of commerce and organisations promoting development in Yorkshire—are anxious that King's Cross is chosen. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the possibility of a second terminal at Stratford. However, if one studies the map, Stratford cannot possibly be justified as the location of an interchange. But an enhanced King's Cross will improve capacity for InterCity trains by rearranging tracks, extending platforms, and improving access from many parts of the country. Right hon. and hon. Members representing the interests of other regions will also identify the opportunities that King's Cross offers.

As to timing, the proposed works—including the new low-level station—are needed as soon as possible. That is why we should consider the Bill now and not wait for a future Channel tunnel rail link. If passengers travelling to and from the north, as well as Thameslink passengers—whose existing separate station is already congested—are properly to benefit, one cannot wait for developments that may take some time to realise.

Architectural considerations relating to the above-ground works will be examined when Camden council scrutinises the relevant planning application. The architecture of the proposed concourse, which will bring together the two stations and link them with the new sub-surface platforms, is imaginative. It makes use of a great deal of glass, and allows the architecture of the existing grade I buildings to be seen by all. By sweeping away many substandard buildings, much will be done to improve the local environment.

I see this as an exciting project. I hope that the House also welcomes it and will give the Bill a warm reception.

Mr. Chris Smith *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 41.

Division No. 188] **[11.39 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Ames, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clelland, David
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Neil Thorne and
Mr. Gary Waller.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Battle, John
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunn, Bob
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Holland, Stuart
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Richardson, Jo
Rowe, Andrew
Ruddock, Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill that they shall take evidence and report to the House on the capacity of the proposed works to provide for fast, frequent and reliable passenger and freight connections between the Channel Tunnel and the Midlands, North and Scotland and on the environmental impact of the proposals.—*[Mr. Dobson.]*

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 68, Noes 186.

Division No. 190] **[11.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunn, Bob
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
O'Brien, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Jo
Rowe, Andrew
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Neil Thorpe and
Mr. Gary Waller.

Question accordingly negatived.

Smoking in Public Places

Postponed proceeding on Question, That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4225/89 and Corrigendum on banning smoking in public places; recognises that if agreed it would allow the Government to continue its current successful policy of achieving progress in this area largely through voluntary rather than legislative means; and endorses the Government's objective of replacing the draft Recommendation with a mixed Resolution or Recommendation, which would recognise Member States' doubts about Community competence in this area, *resumed.*

12 midnight

Mr. Freeman: In the earlier part of the debate on the motion in the name of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister I explained that the draft resolution of the Council of Ministers is non-binding on the member states and does not have the force of law. We would be permitted to continue our voluntary policy of encouraging those responsible for restaurants, pubs and transport, both public and private, to segregate smokers from non-smokers, but it would remain essentially a voluntary policy, except when safety issues are involved, as they are on the Underground where smoking is banned.

The Government fully support the Europe Against Cancer campaign, but we believe that the Community should not be involved in setting standards for public health. The Commission, of course, does not agree with that view. However, it proposes to proceed on the basis of the treaty as a whole under this draft non-binding resolution, without any reference to a specific article. Therefore, any decision by the Council of Ministers to carry the resolution would require unanimity.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): If the Government and, presumably, the Council of Ministers generally regard this sort of proposal as an impertinent irrelevance, why do they allow the Commission to waste its time on this offensive stuff? Why did they not say, "Mind your own business" at an earlier stage?

Mr. Freeman: I do not regard this issue as at all offensive. It is an extremely important issue on which I as a Health Minister, my senior colleagues in the Department of Health and the British Government——

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Freeman: If I might finish my sentence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Mr. Freeman.

Mr. Freeman *rose——*

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Freeman: If I might finish my sentence, I will be glad to give way.

As a Health Minister, I take the issue extremely seriously and support the notion that we should encourage the segregation of those who wish to smoke from those who do not wish to smoke or inhale cigarette smoke from those who choose to smoke.

Mr. Budgen: Let us understand the Government's position. Do the Government welcome this interference from the EEC? If the matter may be dealt with by our domestic legislature, why is the EEC interfering in it? In the first instance, we are not interested in whether the Government think that it is a good thing. Is this matter properly left to the EEC or should our domestic legislature be left alone to decide it?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing my attention to the matter.

We accept that some non-public health matters are involved in the draft recommendation and, hence, justify Community consideration—for example, environmental issues. The environment is being polluted by those who smoke in public places. Therefore, as there is a partial competence of the Commission to consider and make proposals under the treaty, as I said earlier, we should have a mixed resolution. That part which is correctly related to the treaty can be decided by the Council of Ministers. The rest of the recommendation requires that it should be collectively decided by Ministers outside the framework of the Community treaty.

Mr. Marlow: We all understand that these are important environmental issues which have to be decided at the European Community level. These are environmental issues which cross frontiers between one Community country and another one. Could my hon. Friend explain to the House how it is that, if an individual happened to be smoking at Dover, that would inconvenience or pollute the environment of Calais?

Mr. Freeman: Despite my hon. Friend's intervention, I am sure that he would agree that, on smoking in public places, there is an undeniable environmental aspect to the proposals. Therefore, it cannot be denied that, under the treaty, there is competence on the part of the Commission to bring forward proposals. They are non-binding, as I said before. They are recommendations that would permit the British Government to maintain their policy of the voluntary reduction of smoking in public places.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Hon. Members regularly get this kind of thing from Europe, late at night when everybody is ready for going home. I am getting a bit sick of it. Why do the Minister and the Government not tell them in Europe to go to blazes—telling us what to do? We have Committee Rooms upstairs where hon. Members serve on Bills. Sometimes those hon. Members want to go out into the Corridor to have a cup of coffee and a cigarette or to light their pipes. Although through their Department of Health the Government try to encourage people not to smoke because, we are told, it is a danger, when people are trying not to smoke and when they are sucking the mint with the hole, why are they told in Committee that they are eating and that they must not do it? Why can the Minister not do something about that?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is complaining about us staying up late to debate this matter, but I am trying to speed the process.

Despite our past success in reducing tobacco consumption, we are not complacent. Smoking continues to cause 100,000 deaths each year, or 300 people——

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I asked the Minister a specific question and he has ducked

it entirely. He may agree with what goes on over there, but I can tell him that we are not going to stand for much more of it.

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that smoking regulations in the Palace of Westminster are not a matter for the Department of Health; they are a matter for the appropriate authorities in the House.

In conclusion, smoking continues to cause 100,000 deaths each year, or 300 people per day, and to cost the National Health Service over £500 million each year. We are continuing to monitor the situation and to seek new ways to encourage people to give up smoking. Our aim is to minimise the health risks that flow from smoking.

We have effective controls over cigarette advertising and sponsorship of sporting activities. We have secured a reduction in the average tar yield of cigarettes from 21 mg in 1972 to 13·6 mg today. We help to support ASH—Action on Smoking and Health—which is a voluntary group that campaigns against the use of tobacco. One third of the population smokes now compared with 40 per cent. in 1978. Tobacco consumption has declined faster in the United Kingdom than in any other European Community country, except the Netherlands, but we are not complacent and we need to make further progress. I commend the motion to the House.

12.11 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I welcome the EEC document on passive smoking, but I am disappointed that the Minister has reminded the House that the document allows this country to continue with voluntary methods for segregating smokers from non-smokers. Those who have been concerned about this issue, and some hon. Members who spoke on the motion prior to our previous debate on the King's Cross Railways Bill and the Channel tunnel, are concerned about the legislation. Sadly, their fears are justified because, as the Minister explained, this country is allowed to continue its voluntary approach. My concern is that voluntary measures and public encouragement are not enough to protect people from lung cancer.

Passive smoking causes some risk of cancer. It also affects the elderly, people with cardiac diseases, asthma or allergies and can provoke respiratory diseases. It can endanger the development of the foetus. Smoking is also the cause of many fires.

We are talking not about making places smoke-free or about banning smoking, but about segregating smokers from non-smokers so that non-smokers have the right to breathe clean air.

In Britain we trail behind other EEC countries in only having a law which covers smoke-free areas on public transport. In all other public places there is no law to ensure smoke-free areas. Any restriction is merely voluntary. The result is that we still have restaurants and pubs in which there are no smoke-free zones for non-smokers who may be trying to eat or drink. We have smoking in schools and in hospitals that do not have smoke-free zones.

Any conflict of interest between the smoker and the non-smoker should be resolved in favour of the non-smoker. If backed by legislation, the EEC document would help to reinforce the important public health message that smoking is damaging. Legislation should be introduced to protect non-smokers from smoking in the workplace, restaurants and pubs.

I fully support the Bill that was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) which gained the support of the House by 99 votes to 90, but on which the Government have failed to act. There should also be legislation to protect non-smokers from smoking on commercial transport, such as coaches and airlines. Such legislation should also cover hospitals and schools and any place where services are provided to the public, either free or for a charge.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Lady agree that this matter should be decided by the House and not by the EEC?

Ms. Harman: I hope that the House will decide that it supports the idea put forward in the document and that it will proceed to legislation. In fact, the document has been watered down; all it says is that it would be a good idea if people had smoke-free zones. I feel, therefore, that it is not worth the hon. Gentleman getting hot under the collar about—would that it were.

On 25 January the Prime Minister spoke at the launch of Europe Against Cancer Year. This is an opportunity for the Government to match her rhetoric with action.

The independent scientific committee on smoking and health reported in March 1988 that passive smoking could lead to

"several hundred out of the current annual total of about 40,000 lung cancer deaths in the UK."

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does the hon. Lady agree that the most powerful point was made by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who in his usual absolutely right and passionate way said that we should not be interfering with the rights of the House? Even though the hon. Lady may have a bias against us poor wretched smokers, are we not really discussing whether those awful people in Brussels have the right to dictate to British people? Forgetting the hon. Lady's prejudice against smokers, does she want the people in Brussels to interfere?

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman's fervour is directed at the wrong EEC document. This is no more than a document urging a situation with which everyone would agree. My point is that the Government should go on from that to legislate to protect non-smokers from smoking in the workplace, restaurants, commercial transport, hospitals and schools, and situations where they cannot escape from smokers and the ensuing health risks.

I agree with the independent committee which went on to say:

"non-smoking should be regarded as the norm in enclosed areas frequented by the public or employees, special provision being made for smokers, rather than vice-versa."

The Minister spoke about the Government's concern about smoking, but there was a great deal of anger and concern that in Europe Against Cancer Year—no doubt some hon. Members will object even to that—the Chancellor's Budget failed to raise the tax on cigarettes even in line with inflation.

The Minister mentioned the sponsorship of sport and leisure by the tobacco industry. Anybody who watches any sport on television will know that major indirect advertising from the tobacco industry is poured into people's homes daily. I believe that the Government should ban all advertising by the tobacco industry and end all its sport and leisure sponsorship, which is merely backdoor advertising.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Does the hon. Lady agree that many people smoke because they are under stress? Has she ever calculated what the cost to the Health Service would be of other diseases which would affect people who were forced to stop smoking and who would, therefore suffer greater stress? Is she also not aware that many Tory Back Benchers have been caused great stress—especially me as a smoker—by the British Medical Association?

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman should visit his local hospital and see the many people in hospital because of conditions caused by smoking. I went around my local hospital and the doctors told me that 20 per cent. of the in-patients with heart disease, respiratory problems, circulation problems—some of them double amputees—low birth-weight babies and miscarriages were suffering as a result of smoking. *[Interruption.]* That is scientific evidence. Therefore, one of the important things we can do for public health is to encourage the existing trend to cut down smoking.

I welcome the document. It does not go far enough. I should like the Government to act on their stated intentions and to ensure that legislation is passed. We have had voluntary encouragement of smoke-free zones for a long time, yet in most restaurants, public houses, transport, hospitals and schools it has not worked. We should come into line with other EEC countries and legislate to ensure smoke-free zones.

12.19 am

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As far as I know, nobody intends to divide the House on this and as far as I am concerned everybody can get the hell out of here.

I am not a non-smoker, but an anti-smoker. Smoking killed my father and I suffered second-hand cigarette smoke for the first 18 years of my life. Despite that, I am wholly amazed that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) said that she is content not only with the measure, but to allow the European Community to compel this country to introduce measures on smoking and health. We may have strong views and we may wish to introduce our own measures, but the hon. Lady said that she was prepared to accept rulings on this and to allow Brussels and European institutions to compel this House and this country to introduce measures on smoking and health.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I would not have believed it if I had not heard it myself.

Mr. Marlow: I caution my hon. Friend that such is the state of Europe and the balance of political power within the Commission and the nation states of Europe that Europe is spawning measure after measure of Left-wing, Socialist, interventionist, interfering legislation, and that is why the hon. Lady supports it. That is where she gets her inspiration from. Europe today is about Socialism.

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman is going on a Left-wing trail and he is completely wrong. That lot in the Common Market are dictators—Right-wing dictators—and that is what is wrong. It is high time we told them to come off it and to buzz off. We will determine our own destiny in this place and not be dictated to by that lot over there.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: In a second. One at a time.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has yet to become acquainted with something known as the social charter. It is being pushed by President Mitterrand of France, the other Socialist countries in the Community and the bureaucrats and Socialists in his Commission, and when it is pushed on his party, he will embrace it wholeheartedly because it is Socialism tooth and claw. He will love it and lap it up.

Mr. Budgen: I do hope that my hon. Friend will stop talking about nation states in that old-fashioned way. He and I are proud to be part of a Conservative party which has voted for two massive handouts for the EEC and for the Single European Act, and which has been a most progressive instrument towards a federal Europe. It is no good making these silly remarks which give the impression that there is some reality to the Gaullist and nationalist rhetoric that comes from this party. My hon. Friend must realise that we are a federalist party. This silly talk about nation states simply shows how disloyal he is. That is what the Conservative Government are progressing towards, albeit backing into it.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend makes his point, as usual, eloquently. I think that he will remember that he and I voted against this nonsense when it came through the House. He will also recognise that the balance of opinion within our great party is in favour not of a federal Europe at all but of a Europe of nation states. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend should wait and see. I am more confident than he is that our national party stands for the nation, not for federal Europe.

The issue before us is a recommendation on smoking in public places. In the translation, kindly provided to the House by the European Commission, the word "recommendation" is spelt "recommandation", with an "a" where there should be an "e". I do not know whether that is a Freudian slip or whether it was meant. As the Minister said, at the moment, there is a great argument about the treaty base of this instrument, about whether it should be before us or not and whether it is a matter for Community competence. I can assure my hon. Friend the Minister that when the argument is resolved it will be a "recommandation" and will be forced upon the House.

As day succeeds day, and month succeeds month in the Community, there is an inevitability that where there was at first a little grope or grasp for a small element of competence, it then becomes a definite area of Community competence. Bit by bit, the powers of the House and of British people to control their own destiny in areas where there is no necessity for Eureopean competence are being eroded. Why is that and how has it come about?

I have before me a scrap of paper called the Single European Act, to which are appended 12 signatures, including that of our own very pleasant, very popular, not very senior and not, to my constituents, a very committing Member, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker). It is also signed, very appropriately, by a gentleman by the name of Goebbels. I jest not—his signature is here.

The measure that we are debating this evening has emanated from the Single European Act, the preamble to which says:

> "Moved by the will. . . to transform relations as a whole among their States into a European Union"

We are going to have a European union on smoking and health. We might not like it, we might not have thought that we were going to get it or that we were voting for it when we had the referendum about joining a Common Market. We did not have a referendum about a single European state or a European union, but that is what we have got and that is what we have given the busybodies and that is the situation with which we must deal.

Mark it: the Single European Act that spawned this mischievous instrument will be used by those self same European institutions to envelop us in a web of unrequired, unrequited and unrequested European legislation, for our own good and to make us good Europeans, much of it with no other visible benefit. This measure will have a powerful, invisible effect of transferring power from this House to the European institutions.

This has gone on long enough and it is time that we put an end to it. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has grasped this issue and is aware of the problems that we face. She is aware, as the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) is not, that many of the new measures coming from Europe are corporatist, Socialist and interventionist. She is aware, and the House should become aware, that the time will soon come to say to Europe in unmistakable terms, "Federal Europe, no. A Europe of nation states, yes." The time has not come with this instrument which is small, but the principle is important. This is the time when we should start to put across that message.

12.29 am

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I shall stick to the motion, which is about smoking.

I welcome and support European Community document 4225/89 and the draft recommendation on banning smoking in public places. We are all very much aware of the increasing amount of evidence which points to the dangers to health from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke or passive smoking. The fourth report of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health estimates that several hundred of the 40,000 lung cancer deaths in the United Kingdom result from passive smoking. There is a 10 to 30 per cent. increased risk of lung cancer in people who have never smoked but have been exposed to tobacco smoke for most of their lives.

We hear much evidence about the likely increase of respiratory-type diseases in children of parents who smoke, and the effects of that may come late in life. Most of this evidence is of the effects of smoking in the home, but there is also extensive information about the irritant and adverse effects of smoking in public places, such as restaurants, pubs, public transport and the workplace.

In Stockholm in Sweden, compensation has been awarded for occupational injury to a woman diagnosed as having small cell anaplastic carcinoma of the lung, which is a form of cancer. It is said that it resulted from sharing a poorly ventilated office with several habitual smokers.

. The view that someone else smoking can be a serious health risk was given greater emphasis in the United States in 1986, when the bulk of the 18th report of the Surgeon General gave details about the risk of tobacco smoke to non-smokers. It said:

"To fail to act now on the evidence we currently have would be to fail in our responsibility to protect the public health."

Many states in the United States acted, and more than 40 of them have laws that refer to smoking in the workplace and other public places. Some have total bans in certain areas, and others are restrictive, with designated areas for the smoker.

Those in the House who do not participate in the practice of inhaling the offending substance already know the unpleasant aspects associated with the habit—the smell, the discoloration, the stinging and watering of the eyes, the sore and dry throats. Those are just a few of the things to which non-smokers are exposed when gathering with others in an enclosed environment. People who suffer from various allergic conditions or from chest complaints are often in some difficulty when trying to go about their usual business or when attending a social or leisure function.

As I said, in the United States some states have laws that ban, restrict or regulate smoking in the workplace and other public places—laws in which the rights of the non-smokers prevail over those of smokers. In British law, the odds appear to be stacked in favour of the smoker, and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 does not appear to apply to tobacco pollution—unless the Minister can tell me otherwise.

Although there has been an increase in public awareness of the dangers of smoking in crowded public places and of the risks to health from active and passive smoking, the Government's claim that their policy of achieving progress through voluntary means is a success story is possibly stretching the truth a little.

The message has clearly not got through to everyone. Some will always flout the rules and regulations—such as the group on the train on which I travelled to Glasgow last week. Seven over-21s sat in a non-smoking compartment and began smoking. An elderly couple in the compartment, one of whom obviously suffered from a chest complaint, began to cough and to be in a bad way. We asked the youths to stop smoking, but they refused. The guard also tried to get them to stop, but they still did not. In the end, the train was held up at Crewe station for half an hour. Two policemen came on board and the seven were removed from the train. They were allowed back on, after giving a promise not to do it again, and they got into another compartment. That was one instance where legislation was policed, but that does not always happen.

There are still many public areas and workplaces for which no restrictions or bans on smoking have been introduced. The unpleasantness, the risk to health and the danger from fire are allowed to continue. Many organisations which introduce their own regulations have difficulty in enforcing and policing them. Perhaps on British Rail we shall have policing. Others will not introduce restrictions until they have the law on their side.

I am aware that there is a civil liberty aspect to this matter, but the draft recommendation that we are discussing covers that. It does not recommend that a total ban should be introduced. It makes it clear that there should be provision to permit smoking in parts of public places, and it says:

"clearly defined areas must be reserved for smokers."

If the Government wished to introduce stronger measures to improve the environment for non-smokers, opinion polls would be behind them. A recent NOP survey for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys commissioned by the Department of Health and quoted at an Action on Smoking and Health briefing on 5 May 1989

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

found that 70 per cent. of the public agreed that there should be restrictions on smoking at work. That included 54 per cent. of smokers. About 80 per cent. of the public agreed that there should be restrictions on smoking in restaurants, and 67 per cent. of those were smokers.

In view of the evidence that is available on the damage caused by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and to pollution of the air, and with the Government's new-found interest in green issues, I find their reluctance to take stronger action in this matter surprising. I am left wondering whether it has anything to do with the tobacco lobby. I hope not.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be ironic if we in this place, representing some 600 people, were to enforce on 55 million or more people something which we are not prepared to do on a voluntary basis in our own workplace?

Mr. Fearn: The motion does not force people to do that. In my view, we are all Europeans. For that reason I could not appreciate the need for the debate which took place earlier.

I agree that education, information and health promotion are all important areas that we should not ignore in our attempts to reduce the effects of passive smoking by making people more aware of the harm that it can do. But the time has come for more positive and direct action. For that reason I hope that the Government are not successful in their attempts to have the recommendation—and it is a recommendation—changed to a resolution. It is clear that the Government would take little action under such a resolution.

I am concerned about the wording of the final part of the motion. I shall support the motion on the understanding that the phrase

"which would recognise Member states' doubts about Community competence in this area"

refers specifically to smoking in public places. I am concerned about the wider implications that that phrase might have for the Community's competence in public health matters in general. I do not share the Government's view that the Community lacks competence in the public health policy of member states. There are issues such as food standards and pollution control that have a significant effect on public health for which the Community has responsibility and which is within its competence. I hope that the Minister will explain that point fully.

12.39 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I welcome the opportunity to discuss, albeit briefly, an important issue. I welcome much of what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said in introducing the debate. He reminded us that smoking is the largest preventable cause of death and disease in the United Kingdom and quoted some chilling statistics. He sought to assure us that the Government take these matters extremely seriously. I do not doubt for one minute my hon. Friend's personal commitment, but having a debate of this sort after midnight on a quiet Monday is not an especially convincing demonstration of the importance that the Government attach to the issue.

There appear to be two strands to the argument. One strand is that as smoking is an avoidable cause of death and disease, there is an obligation on the Government to do everything that they can to persuade people, especially the young, not to take up the habit, and to persuade those who already smoke to smoke less or to stop. It is clear that reducing the number of opportunities to smoke has exactly that effect. Secondly, the non-smoker finds sometimes that he must breathe other people's smoke, which is extremely disagreeable. We know now without doubt that it is positively harmful. Therefore, there is an obligation to ensure that as far as possible we do not have to inhale other people's smoke if we do not want to do so. Restrictions on smoking in public places will achieve both the ends to which I have referred. They will dissuade the smoker and protect the non-smoker. That is exactly what is sought by the recommendation before us.

The United Kingdom is not obliged to implement the recommendation, and if it is reduced to a resolution it will carry even less weight. I understand that the Government are not prepared to legislate merely because the EEC requests them to do so, and question whether it has the competence to make the recommendation. I am bound to say that I regret the Government's unwillingness.

It is self-evident that public attitudes have changed a great deal. Only about one third of the adult population now smokes. There are more and more places where non-smoking is requested and more places where there are non-smoking areas. Legislation requiring non-smoking in public places, and especially in work places, would give impetus to the movement and be generally welcomed. The ban on smoking in tube trains and within the Underground system generally has demonstrated the extent to which the public will accept such measures. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the Government would have no hesitation in introducing legislation if that would be necessary for safety and hygiene. Surely health should be included in the hygiene.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearne) quoted from a National Opinion Poll survey. I need not repeat the figures which he presented to us. The survey was commissioned by the Department of Health. The results of the survey tell us that 70 per cent. of those who were questioned agreed that there should be restrictions on smoking at work and that only 18 per cent. of offices have a smoking policy. The figures suggest that there is substantial public support for the rights of non-smokers, who are the majority.

A century ago, smoking was carried on by those who dressed for the occasion. They wore smoking jackets. They normally retired, even in this very building, to the smoking room. I do not see why nowadays the majority of us should have to seek out non-smoking carriages and non-smoking areas. I welcome that part of the document which we are considering that gives the rights of non-smokers priority everywhere except in specifically designated smoking areas.

I regret that the directive does not go far enough, but if only because of its recognition of non-smoking as the acceptable norm I welcome it as being at least a step in the right direction. My hon. Friend's Department promotes policies of preventive medicine, including support for the Health Education Authority and Action on Smoking and Health—though that support is somewhat modest compared with the sums spent by the tobacco industry on promoting its poisonous products.

I urge my hon. Friend to tackle, with all the vigour and diplomacy that he has already demonstrated in office, not

only the problem of smoking in public places but advertising, promotion and sponsorship—particularly that aimed at the young. If he does so, he will have my wholehearted support and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the all-party parliamentary ASH group.

12.45 am

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I get the impression that we have the no-smoking lobby here with us tonight. That is what is going on.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): What about the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman)?

Mr. Haynes: I am not talking only about right hon. and hon. Members on one side of the House. I did not say that. The hon. Gentleman jumps to conclusions. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) may laugh, but we are debating a serious matter. We are talking about jobs, for a start. That is one important aspect. I come from Nottingham, where many people work in the tobacco industry. So put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Our problem is that lot across the Channel. It is not a question of "You should smoke" or "You shouldn't smoke." The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) was talking about smoking in certain areas and wearing a smoking jacket. I can see that what will happen next is that the Smoking Room down the corridor will be closed. What has happened to the freedom of the individual? Very often I pop into the Smoking Room to see who is there, and the right hon. and hon. Members in there all have their cigars and cigarettes going. Does the hon. Member for Chislehurst want to deny them that pleasure? The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but I am convinced that that will be the next move.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has left the Chamber, but I agree with his comment earlier about directives from Europe telling us what we should and should not do. I remember a debate early one morning on a Community directive that we should allow 40 tonne lorries on our roads. As the hon. Member for Northampton, North said, the next step will be a non-smoking directive. Who will be squealing then? I hope that we all will. I have had a bellyful of the people on the other side of the Channel telling us what we should do.

As to polluting the atmosphere in the House of Commons, what about pollution of the atmosphere outside this place? What about nuclear pollution in Cleveland and Cumbria? We are not doing a great deal about that. I squealed in Committee on the Atomic Energy Bill about what action that we should be taking on nuclear pollution. Youngsters are developing leukaemia, and we know how that is being caused.

I return to the point, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am just leading up to all the European directives that we are asked to approve—in the same way, I believe, that we shall be asked to approve one on smoking in public places.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Clearly the hon. Gentleman does not like intervention from across the Channel in the form of actions by the European Commission. Does he not find it a little disquieting that his hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) seems happy to accept the Commission's proposals so meekly in this instance?

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman will not lead me down that road. I am not going to fall out with my hon. Friend. She is a lovely lass, and so are you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Riddick: What is the answer to my question?

Mr. Haynes: I am talking about the freedom of the individual. My hon. Friend is entitled to her opinion, like the hon. Members for Derbyshire, South and for Chislehurst, but I have had a bellyful of being told what to do from across the Channel.

Mr. Day: She is telling you.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) is entitled to her opinion, and I am not going to fall out with her. I have said the same about the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, but I disagree with her. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I have even got support on the Conservative Benches.

I think that you have heard enough from me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have made my point. [HON. MEMBERS: "What was it?"] There are some sarcastic Conservatives in the Chamber tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip, is always here—like me—until the end of the day, even if it is 4.30 am. But many hon. Members are not here when we are dealing with European matters such as this. That is what I say—that I have had a bellyful. Many hon. Members have not experienced what we have experienced in the early hours of the morning. These debates come on far too late, and we are not given proper time to discuss the matters involved.

I am trying to deliver a message: let us get together and say that enough is enough. As I have said before—let me now say it yet again—I have had a bellyful. I am a little disappointed that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is not here, because we usually stand together on such matters, almost arm in arm. We entirely disagree with what is happening. The hon. Member for Northampton, North who has probably gone to bed, disagrees as well. We shall continue to disagree until they shut up over there and let us get on with our job here, and determine the destiny of the people of the United Kingdom. They are the people whom we represent here; that lot over there can look after themselves.

12.52 am

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): In the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), perhaps I may walk arm in arm with the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I entirely endorse what he has said. The House is always delighted when the hon. Gentleman is championing a cause, not least when it is the cause of individual liberty. I am not quite sure how he manages to reconcile it with his amazingly competent role as an Opposition Whip: he is a most fearsome character in that role, but a most delightful one when speaking on individual rights.

I do not wish to detain my colleagues, so I shall be brief. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) —like my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman)—has advanced very good arguments about the dangers of smoking, while others have argued that it is a perfectly legitimate occupation. I believe, however, that the debate is not actually about the

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merits or demerits of smoking: I think that it is about the competence of the European Economic Community to regulate our lives.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Ashfield and my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) speak for a large vein of opinion in the United Kingdom. The more that the EEC continues to poke its nose into affairs that have nothing to do with the Economic Community and are increasingly to do with social matters which do not require unity across the Channel, the more it will alienate the British people and put at risk some of the great advantages to be had from EEC membership.

This is a question of competence. The unwarranted interference of Brussels bureaucrats is far more dangerous than any smoke that is likely to be exhaled by the citizens of our country when smoking cigarettes or pipes. It is vital that the Brussels bureaucrats should be kept in check. They should be told to keep their noses out of our business and to allow this Parliament to determine these matters.

I agree that it is regrettable that European legislation is debated late at night, with the result that any hon. Member who wishes to make a contribution feels that he must keep his remarks short. The Government were right to refuse to be drawn down the path advocated by the Liberals. It is astonishing how many times the Liberals come to this Chamber to tell the people of Britain what they wish to force upon them. They are a bunch of nannies. They are as bad as any Eurocrat in wanting to interfere in the affairs of the people of Britain. They are jolly good candidates for jobs in Brussels. They are far more in sympathy with what is going on there than they are with the mood of the British people. Last Thursday's election results prove that point. Many of them will soon have to look for jobs in Brussels, because they will no longer be here.

I welcome the fact that the Government have decided not to introduce compulsion but to replace

"the draft Recommendation with a mixed Resolution or Recommendation, which would recognise Member States' doubts about Community competence in this area."

I hope that the Minister will make it absolutely clear to those with whom it is his responsibility to negotiate in Brussels that he speaks with the full authority of this Parliament and nation, that we shall not brook interference in our affairs and that he is speaking not simply for himself but for the British people.

12.56 am

Mr. Freeman: This has been a brief, illuminating and somewhat humorous debate. Nevertheless, several serious points have been made, and I shall seek to answer them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims)—to whose work for Action on Smoking and Health, which is much appreciated by many of his colleagues and friends on both sides of the House, I pay tribute—spoke about the serious effect of smoking and the damage that it can do to one's health. I endorse entirely what he said. Sitting next to him is my predecessor in office, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who in last November's debate also underlined the serious effects of cigarette smoking on health. I endorse entirely what she said in the debate, and I have just re-read it. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst asked for an assurance that when we renegotiate the voluntary agreements we shall vigorously pursue them. I give him that assurance.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) referred to the importance of no-smoking areas. I agree with him. That is enshrined in the draft recommendation and also in my statement to the House earlier today. He asked me whether the Government believe that the Commission has competence to introduce proposals concerning public health. The answer is no, we do not believe that it has. I hope that I have made that quite clear to the House.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), who spoke on behalf of the Opposition, asked why our policy of voluntary control could not be replaced by United Kingdom legislation. I hope that I have made it quite clear that the Government do not believe that that is appropriate. It is important to continue with voluntary control. We have had substantial success with voluntary control, and we want more success of that kind. The Opposition believe that legislation is required, but the Government do not share their view.

My hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr Haynes) believe that this is a stalking horse for EC control of public health. It is not. The draft recommendation is non-binding. It does not involve the British Government in taking legislative action. The measure is modest, and while the Commission is right to be concerned about smoking in public places, we disagree that it has the competence to pronounce on public health policy. Nevertheless, I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4225/89 and Corrigendum on banning smoking in public places; recognises that if agreed it would allow the Government to continue its current successful policy of achieving progress in this area largely through voluntary rather than legislative means; and endorses the Government's objective of replacing the draft Recommendation with a mixed Resolution or Recommendation, which would recognise Member States' doubts about Community competence in this area.

Brewing Industry (MMC Report)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

1.2 am

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The proposal in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report into the supply of beer in this country would, if implemented, lead to enormous and fundamental upheaval in the industry.

The report, and the issues surrounding it, need to be debated in Parliament, and perhaps I should explain my purpose in initiating the debate. I have no vested interest in the matter. However, I know something about the industry—which some hon. Members may regard as a disadvantage—because for a number of years before becoming an hon. Member I was a sales manager with a soft drinks company selling to the licensed trade.

I speak as someone who believes strongly in the free market. Any Government action to implement the proposals in the report would amount to an unwarranted —indeed, counterproductive—intervention in the workings of the free market. The brewing industry is a classic example of the free market, having sorted a fairly complex industry into an orderly and consumer-oriented market.

I also speak as someone who believes in the sanctity of private property. I am horrified that one of the main planks of the report would force companies to divest themselves of assets that they have legally and enterprisingly built up over many decades. For a Conservative Government to undermine those two fundamental principles, there has to be clear and overwhelming evidence that competition does not exist and that the consumer is getting a raw deal.

Yet there is almost no evidence in the report that there is massive consumer dissatisfaction with the current set-up. The report tells us that 80 per cent. of beer consumed in this country is consumed away from home on licensed premises. In America, only 20 per cent. of beer is consumed away from the home, in West Germany the figure is 40 per cent. and in Belgium and France, the figure is 43 per cent. Those figures do not suggest mass dissatisfication in the United Kingdom with pubs and clubs.

One of the key factors on which the Monopolies and Mergers Commission based its conclusion that a so-called "complex monopoly" was operating against the interest of the consumer was that the price of beer had increased by 15 per cent. above the retail prices index since 1979. But the report records the results of a survey carried out by the Consumers Association, which showed that only 1 per cent. of consumers mentioned price as the reason for choosing a particular pub. That is not surprising, because beer prices in this country are among the cheapest in the industrialised world. The consumer is looking for the right mix of amenity, choice of product and comfort. If price is as important as the report suggests, why is it that clubs, which generally offer lower prices as well as a lower level of amenity, have declined in recent years?

The real competition exists between pubs. The commission reports that the licensee survey showed that 90 per cent. of pubs had competition within a five-minute walk and that 34 per cent. of licensees faced competition from at least 10 pubs within a similar distance. The report records also that pubs in this country have a much greater advantage in the number of brands of beer per outlet than those in other countries, which is not altogether surprising when one considers that there are more than 1,000 different brands of beer sold in the United Kingdom. Surveys have shown that the British consumer is satisfied with the choice available in pubs—so much for the commission's claim that there is insufficient choice in the British pub.

The report has not even attempted to prove that there is massive consumer dissatisfaction with the current set-up. That is not surprising. I contend that there is no such massive dissatisfaction. I carried out my own survey in the village of Honley in my constituency last Friday by visiting several pubs and clubs. Honley, with an adult population of 5,500, has an interesting mix of pubs and clubs. I found a significant difference in prices being charged and in the level of amenity being offered. One pub was popular because of its taproom, another was known as a beer house and yet another was known as one frequented by young people. It was interesting to note that the pub charging the highest prices also seemed to be the pub attracting the most customers. I talked to some of the punters enjoying a pint in the various pubs. From my own straw poll, I can report that there was practically no dissatisfaction with the choice available. The only grumble I heard concerned the price of low alcohol beer. I was surprised by the high level of awareness of the report. I have to inform my hon. Friend of the enormous concern that it has generated already, especially among tenants and free landlords.

I find it disturbing that the report seems determined to underplay the significance of the massive amounts of money, amounting to about £3 billion, that have been invested in the refurbishment of existing pubs by the brewery companies between 1982 and 1988. The commission makes much play, for example, of the large price increase between July 1985 and July 1986, but fails to mention that that price increase coincided with an especially heavy amount of investment of £1·2 billion in the years 1985 and 1986 alone. It is almost as though the fact of that investment did not fit in with the conclusion that the MMC wished to reach.

One aspect of the report that I find particularly unsavoury is the fact that the MMC highlights the regional variations in the price of beer. I should have thought that lower beer prices in the north could be easily explained by lower property costs as well as lower service costs, not to mention the fact that consumption of beer is far higher in the north than in the south and that that increased volume justifies a lower price. Regional variations are not uncommon where a significant level of services is involved, and I understand that beer price differentials are lower than those in prices for car servicing, cinema admissions and restaurant prices. If the Government act to reduce the regional variations in price—I have no doubt that that would mean an increase in the price of beer in the north —the move will be clearly seen as an attack on the north, and with justification.

I now come to some of the recommendations in the report. The most stunning omission from the report is its failure to examine exactly what effect the proposals will have on the industry. As the dissenting member of the investigating group, Mr. Mills, said:

"the recommendations, if implemented, would be an unnecessary leap in the dark."

The combination of imposing a ceiling of 2,000 pubs on each brewery, insisting on a guest beer being allowed into

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each tenancy and stopping tied loans being made to the free trade will, in my view, lead to many marginal pubs in rural and inner-city areas being closed, many free outlets finding it impossible to get off the ground and an increasing trend towards a few national, heavily promoted megabrands dominating the market.

The report is already creating ripples. Decorative Glass Structures Ltd., a firm in my constituency which manufactures stained glass for pubs, has written to tell me that the effect on its order book has already been significant. The reason for that is simple. Major brewery chains have now frozen all their projects on tenanted premises. We know, too, that three regional breweries have already given notice to all their tenants.

I find it somewhat worrying that the MMC should so signally have failed to calculate just how the brewers would respond to the proposal to limit their tied estate to no more than 2,000 pubs. The MMC rather naively believed that the brewers would meekly sell off a number of pubs to bring their estate down to 2,000, although it does not take a genius to realise that even if they did that, while many pubs would be bought, those on the margin in rural and inner-city areas would almost certainly be closed.

It is now becoming clear that the national brewers would choose to be retailers and simply sell their brewing interests. That would almost certainly lead to a concentration of brewing in the hands of fewer companies and it would also provide the opportunity for foreign brewing interests to buy into the United Kingdom brewing industry. At the moment, the national brewers are happy to keep the marginal pubs open because they contribute extra volume, but once the interests have been split up the retailing companies would see no benefit whatever in keeping such pubs open, so in those circumstances, too, the marginal pubs are likely to disappear.

I am concerned that, despite all the MMC's fine words about its wish to help the small regional brewers, great stress is laid on the fact that there are still opportunities to reduce costs through the economies of scale. By implication the MMC therefore expects there to be fewer but larger breweries in the future. It is worth pointing out that the report records, albeit in passing, that, in 1986, the number of off-licence premises owned by breweries amounted to about 57 per cent. of the United Kingdom total, compared with 78 per cent. in 1967.

The proposal that guest beer should be introduced in every tenancy is well meaning, but it will become counter-productive. It is intended by the MMC to help small regional breweries, but I fear that it is likely to result in big national breweries spending more and more money promoting one or two megabrands that it will be almost impossible for a tenant to refuse to take, not because the brewery is twisting his arm but because of the X millions of pounds being spent on television advertising, thereby giving certain brands an extremely high profile.

Of course, smaller breweries will be able to sell their beers to some of the national tenancies, but hon. Members should make no mistake: when it comes to a battle between the local and big national brands, there will be only one winner, as experience in other countries has shown. I have heard that a regional brewery in the south of England believes that that provision is likely to see its sales of beer decline by about 30 per cent.

Another effect of the proposal being implemented will be the number of tenanted houses that will be turned into managed houses, which I would regret. A tenant tends to be more entrepreneurial than a manager and contributes his own special character to the pub environment.

The proposal that tied loans to the free trade should be eliminated would be disastrous for many small clubs and would make it increasingly difficult for an entrepreneur to start a new club or pub, particularly if the venture were unique or unusual. Even the Campaign for Real Ale recognised in its evidence to the MMC that loans were often necessary for a new free house to be viable. The MMC admitted that there was a great deal of competition between brewers in relation to loans made to the free trade, and, from my experience, I can confirm that free trade outlets frequently change suppliers to get a better deal from an alternative brewer.

I received a letter from a constituent, Mr. John Moxon, who is involved with the Marsden football club in my constituency. His letter states:

> "Six years ago, without any track record, Greenalls brewery had sufficient faith in us to advance a substantial loan to enable us to start up and erect a tastefully furnished clubhouse with full facilities which was then expanded in a similar fashion three years later by further brewery investment. We now enjoy a proud position in the community with great accent on junior football and a family atmosphere second to none in social activities."

He believes that the opportunities to develop clubs in that way will be lost if brewers are no longer allowed to lend money.

Thousands of similar clubs up and down the country would never have got off the ground without the help of breweries and would have found it almost impossible to get a loan from banks, because of the high commercial risk involved and also because, in many cases, there is no collateral for a sports club to offer in return for a loan.

Concern about the issue is not confined to Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) went out of his way to find me and ask me to mention his concern. He is worried about the abolition of loans to rural pubs in Scotland, not to mention employment prospects being threatened in the Tennants brewery in Glasgow.

What is staggering about the report is that it has simply not considered what effects its key proposals will have on the industry; nor has it made any serious comparisons between the United Kingdom brewing industry and brewing industries in other countries. If it had done so, it would have recognised how disastrous its proposals would be. For a start, it would have learnt that the United Kingdom, with over 1,000 beer brands, has infinitely more choice and variety than any other country in the industrialised world and that that is a direct result of the mix of tied and free outlets.

The tie in Australia was abolished 10 years ago, with the direct result that beer prices have increased by 40 per cent. above the retail prices index; two breweries now dominate the market with over 90 per cent. of the market share between them, and the consumption of beer in the home has risen markedly. The fact is that those countries where the brewing industry has no tied outlets are dominated by a few massive companies.

The direct result of the proposals, if implemented, would be the formation of a few large brewing companies, which would then spend massive amounts of money on promoting a few national megabrands. Those promotional activities would in turn ensure that the market share of those national megabrands would increase year after year, so that we would eventually reach the situation that exists in so many other countries. Is that really what the MMC intended?

If my hon. Friend the Minister were to report that the MMC does not intend a free-for-all and that the tie will be continued, albeit in limited form, I would draw his attention to the position in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where there are far fewer tied outlets than in England and Wales and where two breweries dominate the market with over 80 per cent. of the market share.

What I find somewhat ironic is that one of the few companies that is quoted in the report as arguing strongly in favour of the changes suggested, because the tied system is working against it, is Bulmer H. P. Holdings plc, yet without the tied system the brewers would have been wholly unable to break the near-monopoly stranglehold that Bulmer itself had in the 1960s and 1970s, and which it has now lost, to the benefit, I suggest, of all.

I turn briefly to one or two aspects of the report to which I am more favourably inclined. The MMC is keen to see the conditions of tenants improved and that is an area which needs some work. The brewers need to make some concessions in that area. I know that the National Licensed Victuallers Association representing tenants and free landlords is keen to see greater security of tenure and I believe that in the wake of this report it would be appropriate if the Brewers Society sat down with representatives of the tenants to see whether an agreement can be hammered out in relation to some of these issues.

There are one or two lesser aspects of the report with which I agree, but, as one or two of my hon. Friends are pointing to their watches, I shall summarise them briefly. I believe that the MMC report into the supply of beer is fundamentally flawed. It is based on a number of false premises and seems to have been compiled by theoreticians who were determined to arrive at a preconceived set of conclusions regardless of the realities of the industry. If the report's recommendations were implemented, a number of pubs would disappear, the nature of many clubs and pubs would change dramatically and the variety of outlets would be reduced significantly.

The brewing industry in this country provides beer at competitive prices in attractive surroundings which are heavily patronised by consumers up and down the land. It would be ironic indeed if it were a Conservative Government, and this Conservative Government of all Conservative Governments, who meddled in the brewing industry like a good old-fashioned interventionist Socialist Government. We would not be forgiven if we did so meddle and changed the face of the British pub. My advice to my hon. Friend the Minister is very simple and very practical—leave well alone.

1.23 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) for raising this subject. It has been useful to air some of the issues.

It is important to remind the House of the background to this whole issue. The subject of the supply of beer was referred by the Director General of Fair Trading to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1986. The MMC took two and a half years over its deliberations and investigations and reported to us in February this year. The report is a substantial document which, with appendices, runs to just over 500 pages. The MMC came to a clear conclusion that there was a complex monopoly that restricted competition at all levels.

The MMC set out in considerable detail the detriments to the public interest, which it saw as arising from the lack of effective competition in the supply of beer. It is worth repeating those detriments. It found that consumer choice was restricted, both because one brewer did not allow another brewer's beer to be sold in outlets which the first brewer owned and—perhaps especially important—because of the brewers' efforts to ensure that their brands of cider and soft drinks were sold in their outlets.

The MMC found that the tenant's bargaining position was so much weaker than his landlord's that he was unable fully to meet consumer preferences. In addition, independent manufacturers and wholesalers in beer and other drinks were allowed only limited access to the market. The MMC found that the results were that the price of beer in public houses had been rising much faster than inflation in the past few years; the price of larger was higher than justified by the cost of producing it, and that the variation in wholesale prices between regions was excessive.

The MMC concluded that those were serious public interest detriments. It must surely be clear that the Government cannot simply ignore those findings. Our consistent policy has been to give power to the consumer, and the best way of doing that is to ensure that competitive markets work properly.

In the past couple of weeks we have seen quite an extraordinary campaign conducted through advertising in the national press. That was a campaign that was eventually identified as emanating from the Brewers Society. However, that campaign has not sought to argue through the issues in any thorough sense at all. It has instead been based on assertions and emotive appeals, many of which do not stand up to scrutiny. At least, my hon. Friend has actually put and developed arguments and has not simply relied on bald assertions.

I shall try to deal with some of the points that have arisen. An attempt has been made to create the impression that the entire industry is united in its opposition to the MMC's recommendations, but that is certainly not the case. For example, Friday's trade press quoted one regional brewer as saying:

"The report contains more positives than negatives, and if the big six got their heads out of the sand they'd see that."

The Small Independent Brewers Association came to see me last week to tell me personally of its support for the recommendations. It welcomed the opportunity to compete on more equal terms with the bigger breweries. CAMRA—the Campaign for Real Ale—has told us that it, too, is strongly in favour of the report's recommendations. In addition, the National Licensed Victuallers Association supports the arguments set out in the report for stronger tenants' rights. Well they might do so, because in the past few weeks tenants of a number of major breweries have found themselves served with notice to

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quit. That is not just hearsay. My Department has received a number of letters from tenants who are seriously concerned about their position.

It is worth recalling that nearly 100 pages out of the 300 that form the body of the report are given over to consideration of the views of the Brewers Society and of individual views. Therefore, brewers' views have been carefully considered.

In its report, the MMC paid tribute to the rigour and thoroughness of the Brewers Society in responding to the MMC's questions and to the society's effectiveness in championing its members' interests. Since the report was published, we have seen in the advertising campaign independent evidence of its willingness to champion vigorously its members' interests. It is sad that the quality of that campaign has not matched the seriousness of the issues which are addressed in the MMC's report.

I understand that it is an expensive campaign, which is costing about £200,000 a day. It would have been cheaper for the Brewers Society if, instead of spending all that money—all of which is paid for by beer drinkers—it had spent a more modest sum in coming to my Department in Victoria street to talk to us about its views. I am pleased to report that today, some seven weeks after the report was published, the Brewers Society, in response to our specific request, has written to us with its views and has accepted that it would be better to meet and to discuss the matter face to face.

We are not wedded to every word of every recommendation that the MMC has made. There may well be consequences of some recommendations that were not previously foreseen. There are many recommendations of different sorts affecting different interests in the industry in different ways. It is unusual to find many people who have expressed views who condemn every aspect of the recommendations, and it is important to recognise that.

Clearly, there is a great deal of scope for discussion and we look forward to taking part in those discussions. I am aware that uncertainty is damaging to the industry and that many employees, tenants and others have been alarmed by some of the assertions made during lobbying. I hope that we can resolve those uncertainties as soon as possible. We want to make decisions before long so that these matters can be resolved, but naturally we have to ensure that those decisions are properly considered. We are keen to hear from anyone who has constructive proposals for better remedies than those which are identified by the MMC. I reiterate what my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State said last week:

"If the brewers don't like the MMC proposals let them come to us with alternative proposals which address the serious public interest issues raised".

I am glad that the Brewers Society is now to do that and I look forward to discussions with it, but let no one be under any misapprehension: in the face of the serious public interest findings, for the Government to do nothing is simply not an option.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 9 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Aircraft Orders

1. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what aircraft have been ordered by his Department for the Royal Air Force since 1979.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, it would be appropriate before we answer questions, to ask the House to join us in expressing sadness at the deaths of two naval airmen in an aircraft accident yesterday at Portland and in extending to their families our deepest sympathy.

I refer my hon. Friend to table 5 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989", published last week, copies of which are available in the Library. He will note from that table that firm orders for a total of 550 RAF aircraft of eight different types have been placed since 1979.

Mr. Nicholson: As the first hon. Member to ask a question, may I strongly support my hon. Friend's first sentences. Obviously, flying the new aircraft, the orders for which we welcome, requires very rigorous training. Will my hon. Friend ensure that those pilots whose training involves low flights, which are particularly pronounced in my constituency, notably in Exmoor and west Somerset, are fully aware of the rules and regulations regarding low flying? Will my hon. Friend and his colleagues immediately look into any suggestion that the rules and regulations have been departed from?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes. I can assure my hon. Friend that any incidents of low flying which are brought to our attention in which people did not abide by the rules are rigorously investigated and everything is done to ensure that low flying is properly regulated.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Royal Air Force now has the best modern equipment of any time to meet the envisaged problems and that the aircraft which the Government have ordered do just that? Does he further agree that our aircrew are the most professional and highly trained in the western world? But there is no point in those two achievements if the aircraft —particularly strike aircraft—do not have modern stand-off capabilities otherwise they become very risky against sophisticated modern Soviet defences. Therefore it is essential that we have modern stand-off capabilities and we must upgrade those weapons systems.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why it is so important that our plans to replace the WE177 free-fall bomb with a tactical air-to-surface missile are so vital.

Mr. Rogers: On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I associate the Opposition with the sentiments expressed by the Minister to the families of those killed in yesterday's tragic accident. In view of his answer, which could be quite misleading, will the Minister say how many of the new aircraft have been put into storage because of inadequate radar, how many have been brought in simply as replacements after flying accidents, and how many have been put into full operational service with the RAF?

Mr. Hamilton: There are a number of aircraft which have been put into storage at the moment. That is because of the most economical form of production run. There were some aircraft in which the radars were not up to scratch, but now the radars are improving rather faster than the aircraft so many of the aircraft are being brought into service. There was a small problem but it has been overcome.

MOD Police

2. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the deployment of members of the Ministry of Defence police on land outside his Department's responsibility.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The deployment of members of the Ministry of Defence police is an operational matter for the chief constable, in accordance with the provisions of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister recall that his hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said in Standing Committee on 12 February 1987 that Ministry of Defence police would be used only where defence interests were involved? If that is so, why were they used at Stonehenge? Will the Minister guarantee that the Ministry of Defence police will not be used against workers on strike, or is he in favour of secondary policing?

Mr. Sainsbury: Neither the hon. Gentleman nor myself were members of the Committee, although the record of its proceedings is in *Hansard*. If the hon. Gentleman had been a member of the Committee, he might have been more familiar with section 2 of the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987. I draw his attention especially to subsection 2(2)(d), which makes clear the power of the Ministry of Defence police to operate outside Ministry of Defence land, including in support of a Home Office constabulary.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend will be aware of my scepticism at the passage of that Act, in that it created for the first time a national police force under the direct control of a Minister of the Crown. However, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is wrong in what he says. Will my hon. Friend accept that it is invaluable that the Ministry of Defence police help the civil police in disturbances that may arise, and in the protection of Stonehenge in my constituency? The delicate balance between the maintenance of the Queen's peace and the

upholding of the law is enhanced considerably by the devotion, dedication and professionalism of the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that the whole House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said about the loyal and dedicated service given by the Ministry of Defence police. The chief constable of Wiltshire was grateful for the assistance rendered a year ago by the Ministry of Defence police in helping his force to maintain law and order and in protecting an important monument, in addition to the wellbeing of my hon. Friend's constituents.

Foulness and Maplin

3. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans or proposals he has for returning Foulness island and Maplin sands to civilian use.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): None, Sir. The use of Foulness island and Maplin sands is essential to the operation of the proof and experimental establishment at Shoeburyness. It makes a vital, impartial and cost-effective contribution to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of our weapons systems.

Dr. Clark: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are rumours in my constituency that a consortium is seeking to build a major international airport on Maplin sands? Will he confirm that he is not negotiating with that consortium, or any other, and that he has no intention or plans to do so at present?

Mr. Neubert: I am aware of the rumours circulating in my hon. Friend's constituency. Matters of airport policy are for our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Nuclear Submarines (Accidents)

4. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the worst possible accident of a nuclear submarine in or near a British port for which his Department has emergency plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The nuclear accident plans of the Ministry of Defence are prepared in line with the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection. The reference accident, on which the plans are based, envisages the release of some radioactive fission products into the atmosphere. In accordance with the ICRP recommendations, the plans are designed to be flexible enough to apply in worse accidents. In addition to that, the Royal Navy regularly exercises some of these extremely improbable accidents. The plans also consider the possibility that the submarine could sink.

Mr. Evans: Yes, but will the Minister confirm that the worst possible accident that could occur to a nuclear submarine in port would be a primary containment failure, which would put many civilian lives at risk? Will he also confirm that local authority emergency planning officers have never been briefed about that probability and would have, therefore, no idea how to react if such an accident occurred?

Mr. Hamilton: It is probable in those circumstances that the submarine would burn and then sink. The radioactivity would be contained if the submarine sank, as water is the best substance for containing it.

Mr. Greg Knight: Is not the worst possible scenario an attack when we had a Government who were not prepared to press the firing button?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, that is right. There is no point in having a nuclear deterrent unless one is prepared to use it. I am sure that the Soviet Union will have taken into account the fact that the Opposition are saying that they are not prepared to use it.

Dr. Reid: Is the Minister aware that on Sunday 7 May 1989 a vehicle allegedly transporting radioactive materials was involved in an accident at Cleland in my constituency? Can he confirm that there was radioactive material on board that vehicle? If so, will he confirm whether the vehicle bore the appropriate markings? Will he give a categorical assurance that the lives and personal safety of my constituents were not endangered? Will he now accept the unsuitability of that particular road between the two motorways for vehicles carrying hazardous substances and order a full investigation into why it was there in the first place?

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having given me notice of his supplementary question. I understand that, on a journey from Derby to the naval dockyard at Rosyth on Sunday, a contractors' lorry carrying a portable cabin belonging to Rolls-Royce and associates was involved in a minor accident on the road to Cleland, Lanarkshire. The cabin was one used in the non-destructive examination of plant and equipment. Police took precautions on learning that, although there were no radioactive sources within the cabin, it carried an aluminium container and a roll of plythene properly marked with warning tapes, which both held items which were mildly contaminated with radioactivity through having been used in test procedures. Anyone would have been able to pick up and handle the items without coming to any harm. Once the lorry's load had been re-adjusted the lorry continued on its journey to Rosyth.

Nuclear Weapons

5. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the most recent proposals for new nuclear artillery shells.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): SACEUR's latest nuclear weapons requirement study addresses the full spectrum of NATO's nuclear requirements, including the need to continue with the modernisation of NATO's nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Pike: The Secretary of State will know that Chancellor Kohl has called for equal ceilings for nuclear artillery shells at drastically reduced levels. Does not that conflict with the policy of the United States Government to modernise and to develop new nuclear shells that are capable of being turned into neutron bombs? Will the Secretary of State argue that the new shells should not be deployed in Europe?

Mr. Younger: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is familiar with SACEUR's nuclear weapons

requirement study. The proposals in it include a very large net reduction in the number of nuclear warheads. That compares with the fact that NATO has reduced its nuclear warheads by no less than 2,400 in recent years, whereas the Soviet Union has made practically no reduction. It is well open to the Soviet Union to make reductions if it so wishes.

Mr. Janman: Can my right hon. Friend predict what the effect would be on his Department's ability to defend the country, on the morale of the armed forces and on the nation's security, if the Labour party's policies on defence were implemented?

Mr. Younger: That is extremely difficult to predict, but it is certainly true that any policy that tried to throw over the policy of nuclear deterrence, which is supported by all countries in NATO, would be quite disastrous for the safety and security of this country.

Mr. James Lamond: In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) the Secretary of State mentioned 2,400 warheads. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that when I mentioned the subject to the Prime Minister at Question Time, she dismissed it as nothing at all—just a small reduction by NATO? Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the Prime Minister and tell her which story they should go forward with?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman is trying to make. The Prime Minister has often referred to those figures, as have I. The hon. Gentleman must face the fact that the policy of nuclear deterrence is supported by all members of NATO without exception —including all those with Socialist Governments. The Labour party is in danger of getting out of step with all of them.

Mr. Sayeed: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House of the balance of nuclear-capable artillery between Soviet and NATO forces?

Mr. Younger: I shall be glad to remind the House of the modernisation that has been taking place. For instance, the Soviet Union has modernised 95 per cent.—almost all —its short-range nuclear missile systems in the past five years. It has replaced Frog missiles with the more capable SS21s and it is deploying the AS16 missile, which is a tactical air-to-surface missile. Labour Members who are supposed to be considering these matters should be a bit realistic about what is going on in the world.

Nuclear Tests (Compensation)

6. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review his policy on compensation for veterans of British nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: The policy of my Department is to pay appropriate compensation wherever the Crown's legal liability is established. Since there is no firm evidence to show that the health of British test veterans was affected by exposure to radiation during the United Kingdom's nuclear test programme, the Government remain of the view that the Crown cannot be held legally liable for any ill-health suffered by those who participated. We do, of course, have the greatest sympathy with those who suffer illness and who believe, quite sincerely, that this is due to their participation in the nuclear test programme. However, in the circumstances, we see no reason to change our policy on the question of compensation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As the Australian Government are paying compensation to certain veterans as a result of their involvement in a nuclear test, and the United States Government are paying compensation for 13 forms of cancer contracted by personnel involved in nuclear tests, is it not especially mean and insensitive for the British Government not to consider compensation for British service personnel who have been involved in the same tests? Will the Government consider the appointment of an ombudsman independently to analyse those compensation claims?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have studied the National Radiological Protection Board, report, which was independent and authoritative. I am sure that he will have due regard to its findings.

I understand that the terms of the judgment of the Australian court were published in Australia only last Thursday, although judgment was given rather earlier. A copy of the terms of that judgment was received by my Department only yesterday, so we have not had time to study its contents. I cannot yet say whether it will have any relevance or give us any cause for reassessing our position.

Mr. Sumberg: Does my hon. Friend agree that, however generous the compensation, none would be sufficient to compensate for the loss of life and freedom that would be engendered by this country adopting the foolish and ill-considered policies of the Opposition? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the same rules apply here as in Prime Minister's questions. Questions must relate to Government responsibility.

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that over the years members of our armed forces have been prepared to give very loyal service and to suffer injury and death to protect their country. We have drawn attention—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am seeking to reply to the point raised by my hon. Friend. I re-emphasise that it has always been the policy of my Department to give compensation where liability has been established. We also have a system of pensions for those who have been injured or for the dependants of those who have lost their lives in service to their country.

Mr. Boyes: That was a most disappointing and insensitive series of replies. It is unacceptable that the Minister is not offering compensation to nuclear test veterans. Will he, however, assure the House that he will consider giving compensation to those other nuclear veterans, the submariners, who have been discovered to have contracted cancer because of their service in nuclear submarines? Today the Minister's replies are nothing less than complacent, dilatory and lacking in care. It is about time that the Minister gave the House a guarantee that the Government will do something for those people who have suffered because of nuclear tests or their service in nuclear submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the hon. Gentleman, speaking as he does from the Front Bench, will have regard to the importance of being fair to all people involved and not just to those who are suffering from cancer, which they believe may have been caused by their participation in nuclear tests. As cause or connection was not established by the NRPB study, we have a responsibility to be fair to everybody—those who are suffering from cancers, who were not involved in nuclear tests, and those who were.

As is not unusual, the hon. Gentleman has gone off rather ahead of any factual information. The study to which he referred has been in progress for some time, and it is a study to check the general health of submariners. The hon. Gentleman should be aware of the fact that, if one is beneath the sea, one is protected from the nuclear radiation that all the rest of us are exposed to as we go about our normal business.

Nuclear Weapons

7. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from his Belgian counterpart about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Younger: In recent weeks my Belgian colleague and I have discussed the question of modernising NATO's short-range nuclear weapons both bilaterally and at a meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group. The NPG communiqué, to which we both subscribed, reflects a large measure of agreement on essentials.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. Wilfried Martens, has been pressing the Government and other NATO countries for earnest East-West discussions about reductions in nuclear short-range forces? Why are the Government continuing the arms race philosophy, being so hard-line and causing such disagreement nowadays in NATO, such that the British Government seem to be the only Government who want to perpetuate the arms race?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is not fair to the Belgian Government because all along the Belgian Government have supported the main NATO strategy of nuclear deterrence and have strongly said that they do not favour a third zero of the shorter-range nuclear forces. They agree that weapons systems must be kept up to date. We must be fair to the Belgian Government.

I wish to make it quite clear that the British Government consider the policy of nuclear deterrence, in which the shorter-range nuclear weapons play an important part, as a key factor in preventing war. It is to prevent all war that all our policy is directed and it has been successful over the past 40 years.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend take time during his next discussions with the Belgian Defence Minister to assure him that this Government will stand firmly behind the NATO strategy of nuclear deterrence, will ensure that proper conventional forces are supplied into the future for NATO's deployment and will ensure that we shall never let our allies down by backing out of NATO or even discussing such a possibility?

Mr. Younger: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend and I re-affirm definitely that we in this Government entirely support the prevention of war by nuclear deterrence. In that we are supported absolutely unanimously by all our NATO allies of all political persuasions. All hon. Members, especially those in the Labour party, should reflect on that carefully at this time.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the right hon. Gentleman support President Bush in his new policy of re-integration towards the Soviet Union? Does he accept that that signifies that United States is moving towards the Kohl-Genscher view on the modernisation of nuclear weapons? Will he take steps to advise the Prime Minister to moderate her views before President Bush moderates them for her?

Mr. Younger: I fully support what the United States has been saying on these subjects in recent weeks under its new Administration. Its words are absolutely in line with those of myself and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Leigh: Would my right hon. Friend retain any credibility with his Belgian counterpart if he supported the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons on the basis that he doubted whether they were any use at all, that he would never use them anyway, and that he would phase them out by the year 2000? Would not even the Belgians think that my right hon. Friend was guilty of fudge and mudge?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I cannot think of anyone in any of the other member states of NATO who would agree that the possession of a deterrent that one says that one would never use is of any use whatever.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Secretary of State say which members of NATO support the Government's position on modernisation because not even the United States is prepared to go along with that and is itself seeking a compromise with the Federal Republic of Germany?

Mr. Younger: In answering that, I cannot do better than to quote from the NATO communiqué, to which all members of the Alliance subscribe——

Mr. O'Neill: Not completely.

Mr. Younger: Including my Belgian colleague. The words that he subscribed to are:

"For the foreseeable future our strategy of deterrence will continue to require both conventional and nuclear forces. At this meeting we again expressed our determination to ensure that NATO possesses diversified, survivable and operationally flexible nuclear forces across the entire spectrum. These forces must be kept up-to-date where necessary."

That is a complete answer to the hon. Gentleman and to his party while it is trying to work out its future policy.

Soviet Air Force

8. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether the Soviet Air Force has reduced its offensive capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no evidece to indicate that the Soviet air force has reduced its offensive capability; indeed there are signs that this capability has continued to grow. My hon. Friend will find this aspect covered more fully in the 1989 defence White Paper.

Mr. Mans: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that it shows the need constantly to update our own Air Force equipment and to be prepared, if necessary, to use that equipment, which the Labour party's policy does not recognise? That is the only way to ensure that we can negotiate arms reductions from a position of strength rather than weakness.

Mr. Hamilton: That is absolutely true. The Soviet Union is producing 600 new fighters every year and 40 to 45 heavy and medium bombers. Those are becoming increasingly better equipped and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the Soviets have a good tactical air-to-surface missile which, I am quite convinced, is more sophisticated than our free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that his assessment of the offensive capability of the Soviet air force would be affected if President Gorbachev had given an undertaking never to make use of that offensive capability?

Mr. Hamilton: That is right. We are still awaiting such a pronouncement from President Gorbachev that he is not prepared to use armaments. His existence as president of the Soviet Union would be short-lived if he made such an announcement.

Burden Sharing

9. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the latest United States plans for burden sharing will affect United Kingdom defence costs and commitments.

Mr. Hamilton: The defence planning committee report published in December 1988, on the sharing of roles, risks and responsibilities within the Alliance acknowledges the United Kingdom's substantial and comprehensive commitment to the Alliance. However, it calls on us to continue efforts to achieve greater efficiency and value for money from the existing resources we commit to defence and to improve the real value of our defence budget. We fully accept this NATO challenge.

Mr. Clay: Will the Minister give an undertaking that one form of burden sharing that the Government will not go in for will be to accept in this country the American short-range modernised nuclear weapons which the west Germans had the good sense to refuse in their country?

Mr. Hamilton: The question of the follow-on to Lance being based in this country does not arise. We will, of course, review whether tactical air-to-surface missiles and dual-capable aircraft are based in this country.

Mr. Thorne: While I accept the need to ensure that everyone carries a fair burden in NATO, will my hon. Friend remind our American allies that it is also important that burden sharing in the far east is encouraged? The Japanese, by their actions, have been forced severely to reduce their contribution in the years since the war. That has been a major contribution to the fact that the Japanese are able to take us on in the industrial world. Would it not be better to ensure that the Japanese also make a fair contribution?

Mr. Hamilton: I know that our friends in the United States are concerned about the contribution made by the Japanese to the defence effort in the far east, and that is certainly something which we are discussing with them.

Mr. Cryer: Would it not be fairer if we reduced the level of our defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP to the average of our NATO allies? That would release some facilities that we could put into manufacturing industry, and so move towards the level of GDP percentage spending achieved by the Japanese Government, which is less than 1 per cent. We might then be able to emulate the success in manufacturing industry achieved worldwide by the Japanese.

Mr. Hamilton: I believe that the Japanese contribution to defence spending is in excess of 1 per cent. and, because its economy is so large, it is one of the biggest defence budgets in the world. We have a defence budget that meets our commitments and we should not reduce it below that level. We have made an enormous contribution to British industry and our defence exports are one of the finest parts of our overall export performance.

NATO

10. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet the Secretary of Defence of the United States of America to discuss the case for improving upon existing levels of defence efforts among west European NATO partners.

Mr. Younger: I expect to meet the United States Secretary for Defence, along with other Alliance Defence Ministers, at the NATO defence planning committee in Brussels next month. We shall discuss a wide range of issues, including the sharing of roles, risks and responsibilities within the Alliance.

Mr. Taylor: At that meeting, will my right hon. Friend draw attention to the fact that six members of NATO commit less than 3 per cent. of their GDP to defence spending, which puts increased pressure, particularly on Great Britain and America, to ensure that NATO's defences are steadfast and sufficient? Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that no Government in NATO have refused to pledge themselves to a proper policy of deterrence and the use of such a policy when circumstances require it? Therefore, the present British Government must continue in power to prevent any party from replacing that policy.

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. It is very important that in an Alliance of equal, free, democratic nations all should pull their weight in the common defence. We certainly want to make sure that we play our full part and that we encourage all our allies to do the same.

Not only has the policy of deterrence been inordinately successful over many years now, but it is pointless to have a deterrent that one says in advance one is not prepared to use. The Government's policy is clear: the best way of preventing all war is nuclear deterrence.

Sir Antony Buck: When my right hon. Friend meets the United States Secretary of Defence, will he express to him the gratitude felt by most people in this country for the fact that the United States maintains such a substantial

commitment for the defence of Europe and that 100,000 of "their boys" are in Europe largely in our defence, as well as theirs?

Mr. Younger: I agree. The American contribution to NATO's common defence efforts is notable and welcome. It is worth adding that it was put in train by the American Government precisely because they understand that the defence of the United States of America starts in Europe. That is why they put their weight into it.

Armoured Vehicles

11. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what armoured vehicles have been ordered by his Department for the Army since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979, the Ministry of Defence has ordered seven regiments of Challenger 1 main battle tanks; 13 battalions of Warrior; 10 battalions of Saxon and a range of other type of armoured artillery, air defence and support vehicles.

Further details of these and other orders are contained in table 5 and paragraphs 327 and 328 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989".

Mr. Mitchell: Does not the excellent record that my hon. Friend has just outlined demonstrate both the quantity and the quality of the equipment with which we provide the armoured corps within the Army? Does it not also underline the strength and commitment of the Government to the deterrent effect of our conventional forces?

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree entirely. Of course, it also highlights the importance of keeping weapons systems up to date, whether conventional or nuclear.

Mr. Haynes: Not many moments ago a Minister agreed at the Dispatch Box with the use of Ministry of Defence police to support the civil police with problems. Bearing in mind the Secretary of State's majority at the last election, would he press the button to use the vehicles mentioned in the question against British people if he thought that was necessary?

Mr. Sainsbury: I must confess that I am not readily able to determine my ministerial responsibility for my right hon. Friend's majority, but I shall do all I can to increase it next time.

The Ministry of Defence police, whose operational tasks are under the control of their chief constable, would come to the aid of a Home Office force only at the request of its chief constable.

Mr. Speaker: The main question is about armoured vehicles.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. Friend agree that as 50 per cent. of 1BR corps is supplied by the Territorial Army there is a strong case for ensuring that the Territorial Army battalions designated to NATO have armoured personnel carriers at their disposal? Will he acknowledge that as these vehicles are manufactured so ably in Shropshire—and the engines even more so in Shrewsbury—I have no great personal interest to declare?

Mr. Sainsbury: As my hon. Friend is well aware from his knowledge and experience, these new armoured personnel carriers are a great deal more capable and provide a great deal more protection than the vehicles that they replace. As he also knows, the battalions of Saxon are largely going to equip units that did not have armoured protection before, so, again, we are considerably increasing our capability.

NATO

12. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent NATO nuclear planning group meeting.

Mr. Younger: At the nuclear planning group meeting on 19 and 20 April, Ministers reaffirmed their determination to ensure that NATO has effective and up-to-date nuclear forces across the full spectrum of ranges, and expressed their continued support for national efforts to meet modernisation requirements stemming from Montebello. Ministers also noted SACEUR's conclusions about the link between modernisation and stockpile reductions and about the contribution to deterrence of new longer-range, ground-launched and air-delivered weapons. A copy of the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, and agreed by all Ministers, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wray: Is it not a fact that a question mark hangs over the decision taken by the nuclear planning group? Is it not also a fact that the Prime Minister, by delaying the modernisation of short-range missiles, is reluctant to accept that decision? Does the right hon. Gentleman's statement mean that there is to be an increase in the number of FE111s and FE15s?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is misinformed about the outcome of the meeting. The outcome, with the unanimous agreement of every nation present, was to reaffirm the nuclear defensive strategy of NATO, to reaffirm the need to keep weapons up to date and to reaffirm the unanimous view of all that a third zero would not be in the interests of the west. It cannot be said too often that we have had secure peace and freedom from war for so many years because of the existence of nuclear deterrence, which we would abandon at our peril.

Sir Anthony Grant: What does my right hon. Friend think would have been the reaction of his colleagues at that NATO meeting had he told them that it was the policy of Her Majesty's Government not to use the nuclear deterrent, even if necessary?

Mr. Younger: I am afraid that if I had made such a statement, nobody present from any Administration of any party would have agreed with me. Britain would have been in a minority of one, and I hope never to see Britain in a minority of one at NATO.

Mr. Sean Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman now answer the question that I put to him on 7 March, which the Minister of State also refused to answer on 11 April and about which I wrote to the Department a month ago and to which I have not received a reply? Do the Government take seriously the threat of a tactical nuclear attack on NATO's fixed assets in West Germany?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure what lies behind the question—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The Government certainly do take seriously the large superiority in weapons lined up against us in western Europe—weapons of all

kinds; nuclear, conventional and chemical—and it is to make all those unusable that the policy of nuclear deterrence has worked so effectively for so long.

Mr. Marlow: How would my right hon. Friend set about planning into such a meeting a nuclear deterrent which he had committed himself not to use? Would it not be something of a white elephant? Or, to put it another way, would it not be like hiring an expensive guard dog which had lost its bark, which he was having put down and which he intended to stuff?

Mr. Younger: I cannot better my hon. Friend's simile. To arm oneself with a deterrent which one then said one would in no circumstances use would be about as effective as a feather duster.

West Germany

13. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon his recent discussions with his West German counterpart.

16. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon his recent discussions with his West German counterpart.

Mr. Younger: I had discussions with Dr. Scholz on matters of mutual interest at the Western European Union and the nuclear planning group meetings last month. I have not yet had an opportunity to meet Dr. Stoltenberg who replaced Dr. Scholz as Federal Minister of Defence on 21 April.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State try to realise that Germans will be killed in their thousands if weapons at present based on their soil are ever used, so that when they take part in East-West relations they welcome the opportunity to negotiate with the Soviet Union cuts in conventional and short-term nuclear forces to achieve levels below present NATO levels?

Mr. Younger: I well understand the sensitivities of people living in Germany to such matters, but it is a sad fact of geography that if any war were to break out it would be the British, Americans and Germans in the central front area who would be in danger. Nuclear deterrence exists to prevent war. It has been successful and only an irresponsible Government would abandon it.

Mrs. Clwyd: The Secretary of State has persistently reminded the Opposition this afternoon that they should live in the real world. Is not the real world the fact that the West Germans are responding to public opinion in West Germany which is opposed to the modernisation of nuclear weapons? Is it not a fact that 71 per cent. of people in Britain are also opposed to the modernisation of nuclear weapons, and 61 per cent. of those are Tory voters? Why do not this internationally isolated Government live in the real world and follow what real people are feeling in the real world?

Mr. Younger: I had hoped that I would be able to welcome the hon. Lady to the real world, but unfortunately I cannot, because the views that she has expressed are out of step with every Government of NATO, without exception, including the German Government.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was also present at Victoria station to mark the arrival of President Babangida. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet in honour of President Babangida.

Mr. Lewis: Will the right hon. Lady consider establishing a statutory committee to oversee the standards of premium telephone services in recognition of the fact that the voluntary committee, set up and funded by British Telecom, has fallen into disrepute?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe that the voluntary committee has fallen into disrepute. The Director General of Telecommunications, who has invited comments by the end of April on the proposed code of practice and amendments to the licences, is going precisely the right way.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will my right hon. Friend consider making available the health inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to examine a product which is to be put on the market this afternoon—a gigantic nuclear fudge?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes his own point in his own way. I expect that it will turn out to be unilateralism in a different wrapping.

Mr. Kinnock: How could the Secretary of State for Health say last Saturday that the Health Service is at the limit of its capacity to absorb money when the health authorities report today that hospitals are underfunded by £490 million this year?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman or anyone else suggests that hospitals are underfunded at their present rate, they must have been in dire circumstances when they had only one third of that amount from Labour.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister simply tell us whom she thinks is telling the truth? Is it the Secretary of State, who says that the Health Service cannot take any more money because it cannot absorb it, or the health authorities, who say that the hospitals are £490 million short? May we have a straight answer to a straight question?

The Prime Minister: I will give the right hon. Gentleman a straight answer. Under him, the health authorities had only one third of what they are getting now, and that is what he cannot take. They are now getting three times as much as they had under Labour and they are doing far better than ever.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Has my right hon. Friend seen, or will she see, a splendid half-hour programme, independently produced for the BBC last week, called "Thatcher's Children"? Apart from the fact that it was made almost entirely in my constituency of Nottingham, South, which

is part of what she has rightly called the queen of the midlands, does she agree that the young people interviewed showed enterprise and willingness to meet an enterprise culture, which bodes well for the future? Does she also agree that it is quite wrong to equate enterprise with greed and selfishness?

The Prime Minister: The number of young people who are becoming self-employed, starting up their own businesses an taking advantage of all the opportunities is extremely encouraging. They are not only responsible for their own future but are looking after jobs for others and should be encouraged in every way.

Q2. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Walley: Will the Prime Minister confirm that at the seminar at Downing Street energy conservation was recommended by the scientists as being the single thing which could deal with the problems relating to the greenhouse effect? Therefore, will she instruct her Minister of State, Department of Energy, on attending the European meeting on energy conservation this Thursday, to block the advice of civil servants which will effectively prevent a Community action programme for electricity conservation being adopted in this country—a programme already agreed by all other European countries?

The Prime Minister: There was not one particular proposal put forward at the seminar, as I think I explained in answer to a question last time I replied from this Box. One of the proposals was for more nuclear energy, because it does not put up carbon dioxide, and one of the most damaging elements in the greenhouse effect is the burning of fossil fuels. Another was that every effort should be made to retain tropical rain forests and to include that effort in one's overseas aid programme. The third thing was energy efficiency, and we pointed out that this country is using less energy now, at a far higher rate of production than we had in 1973. I hope that the hon. Lady will have read the speech made yesterday by our ambassador in New York asking for a kind of umbrella convention on greenhouse effect gases of the same kind as we have on ozone layer gases.

Mr. Wells: Will my right hon. Friend agree that to grant passports to 3·25 million Hong Kong Chinese would be a breach of the Sino-British agreement which she signed?

The Prime Minister: We could do not do that unless the British Nationality Act 1981 were revised and that would have to go through the House. There are many different opinions about the practical effect with regard to the granting of such passports, but it is not possible under the present law.

Q3. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grocott: Can the Prime Minister confirm that now that she is spending another £1·75 million of our money to mislead people on the poll tax it means that her Government are spending six times as much on publicity and propaganda as any previous Government? Is it not perfectly clear that anything that is so expensive to sell must be a pretty shabby product?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member takes that view he must be pretty ashamed of some of the poll tax documents put out by his local authority. In regard to Government policy, the Government have a clear duty to ensure that everyone knows what his or her main rights and duties are. We are reaching 21 million households at a cost of under £1 million, which is very good value for money. Very soon, on 22 May, most councils will start registering people for the community charge and it is vital, therefore, that people have accurate information for the registration process.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] If Opposition Members are saying "Hear, hear", they must agree that that accurate information should go to every household.

Q4. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ward: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fines imposed by courts for river and harbour pollution are ridiculously low? Will she encourage the Magistrates Association to remind its members that they should use the full penalties available to them to discourage that form of environmental pollution?

The Prime Minister: I greatly sympathise with my hon. Friend's remarks. The average fine imposed by magistrates courts in 1987 was £450, compared with the maximum penalty available of a £2,000 fine and up to three months' imprisonment. That issue has been drawn to the attention of the Magistrates Association several times, most recently by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and we all hope for a positive response.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Ashdown.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes a lot of time.

Mr. Ashdown: In view of the Prime Minister's recent comments, will she say what in her view is the role of the European Parliament?

The Prime Minister: The role of the European Parliament is laid down in the treaty as amended by the Single European Act, and I assume that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to read it.

Q5. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most essential attributes of a political leader is the courage to stand fast to his or her convictions, even when that may temporarily be electorally unpopular? Does she further agree that any political leader prepared to compromise their most cherished political principles for

the sake of short-term electoral popularity is unfit to lead their party and even more unfit to be Prime Minister of this country?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As my hon. Friend knows, we are conviction politicians, and we never put power before principles.

Q6. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashley: The Prime Minister is known to have a very high regard for our ex-service men, so how does she account for her Government's absolutely disgraceful conduct towards British nuclear test veterans compared with that of the United States Government, who grant compensation for 13 forms of cancer as compared with compensation for only two forms of cancer recognised by Britain? The Americans do not demand absolute proof, but the Ministry of Defence is bitterly fighting our ex-service men every inch of the way through the courts and is refusing to pay them compensation. That is a disgraceful state of affairs under a Government whose Prime Minister professes to love and admire our ex-service men.

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, cases were carefully looked at by a special inquiry of medical people, who did not find cause and effect. I say to the right hon. Gentleman with the greatest of respect that the cause and effect that he says has been proved has not been proved, and therefore compensation is not appropriate.

Q7. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Favell: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to consider what would be the effects on the environment if nuclear power were to be phased out over the next 10 years, as the Labour party proposes?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I think that that would be very damaging. As my hon. Friend is aware, during that time a number of Magnox nuclear power stations will need replacing. We hope that, subject to planning permission, there will be four new nuclear power stations by the end of this century, replacing the coal-fired or oil-fired power stations that would otherwise be needed, and which would add grievously to the greenhouse effect—which is something that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to happen.

Q8. **Mr. O'Brien** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Prime Minister aware of the report in the *Yorkshire Post* today in which the CBI and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce criticised the Government for high interest rates, which have had a significant effect on small industries and businesses? When will the Prime Minister do something to lift the strain from small business people and people paying high mortgage rates? When will she take action to reduce interest rates?

The Prime Minister: We do not like to keep interest rates high any longer than we have to. [HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not like to keep interest rates higher than need be, but the most damaging thing would be for inflation to go up to the kind of heights it reached under Labour. That is why interest rates must remain high for the time being.

Q9. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. Friend agree that the privatisation of British Telecom has resulted in much shorter waiting lists for telephones, lower charges for calls and a much wider ownership of telephones among pensioners because of the reduction in standing charges? Will she not further agree that for any political party to talk about renationalisation is thoroughly irresponsible?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the privatisation of British Telecom has, indeed, led to a better service, a substantially increased number of telephones among pensioners and a very considerable reduction of the waiting lists. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is thoroughly arrogant of politicians with little experience of industry to say that they can run industry better than it can run itself.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

John William Patrick Smith Esq., for Vale of Glamorgan.

Burglar Alarms (Control)

3.33 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to regulate the manufacture of burglar alarms to ensure that they do not ring for more than thirty minutes after being set off.

Burglaries, assaults and break-ins are far too common. Many citizens today take steps to protect their security, and they take them in many different ways. They may acquire a large dog; they may even acquire the amplified voice of a large dog, which I gather is rather cheaper. They may join the local neighbourhood watch scheme. They may also obtain a burglar alarm.

When you come to think of it, Mr. Speaker, the burglar alarm is a rather selfish way of protecting one's property. By definition, when people decide to defend their property they are frequently away. They do not think it wise to leave their property unprotected; accordingly, they set the alarm and off they go. They may go to the Pas de Calais or to the Bois de Boulogne; they may go further still, to the uttermost ends of the world. They may go down to Antarctica. In any event, if someone breaks into their property and the burglar alarm rings, they will not be there to hear it.

All the local people, however, will be there to hear it. I am talking about entire neighbourhoods. I encountered two instances in my constituency the other day. One was in the Higham Hill area, where a factory owner set his burglar alarm and went away for the weekend. Off went the alarm on Friday night, and it rang for the whole weekend, disturbing—by my calculation—at least 1,000 people.

It can be even worse than that. Relatives up from the country may be staying, and they will not be used to such sounds. Their repose may be disturbed for the entire weekend. Again, there may be a sick infant in the house, or an elderly friend or grandparent. Perhaps they will be light sleepers; certainly they will not be used to the sound of alarm bells ringing throughout the weekend.

It does not stop there, however. I am talking not only about immobile property, but about mobile property. Just the other day I walked past a car and the alarm went off. I give the House my word that I had neither touched nor even looked at it: it was a particularly nasty modern Japanese model, and nothing would have induced me to go anywhere near it. Perhaps it took grave exception to me. Anyway, the alarm went off.

I went and had a good dinner. When I came back, three hours later, the alarm was still ringing. What is more, I noticed that several more windows were alight in the neighbouring block of flats than when I had walked past earlier. All those people had been roused and disturbed.

I am sure that we have all heard of people being driven mad by such alarms and taking the law into their own hands. I have heard of someone taking a 12-bore shotgun and shooting the alarm off the wall—although that is not to be recommended, being rather a dangerous practice. Others have been forced to acquire expertise in dealing with the alarms. They have mounted stepladders armed with spades or shovels—I gather that the old-fashioned coke shovel is best—to scoop the alarms off the walls. That is what people have had to resort to in their desperation.

I have discussed the matter with the Metropolitan police, and the House will be as horrified as I was to learn that according to their reckoning about 98·4 per cent. of times when they are called to deal with burglar alarms it is a false alarm. The alarms have not been set off by criminal activity. They may, for example, have been set off by a sudden gust of wind. It has been known, in country areas, for a herd of cows to wander past and set off an alarm.

Today I heard of the case of some people who bought a pet, a hamster in a cage. Playing on the little wheel in its cage, the hamster set off the burglar alarm. On that occasion not only were the police called but the RSPCA as well.

I have also discussed the matter with the National Supervisory Council for Intruder Alarms which has been most co-operative and has drawn my attention to the BS4737 with which all the best burglar alarms comply. The standard provides for automatic cut-off after 20 minutes and also that the burglar alarm should be regularly serviced and maintained.

The main thrust of my Bill would be to ensure that people installed high-quality burglar alarms and ensured that they were properly maintained and serviced in the full knowledge that if they were not, and the Bill becomes law, they would find themselves hauled before the beak and dealt with summarily. The amount of disturbance caused by alarms has got competely out of hand and should be stopped. If the Bill becomes law, the police will know in future that if a burglar alarm goes off there is a cat burglar, and there should be fewer cries of "wolf".

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Hugo Summerson, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. Keith Speed, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mr. Chris Mullin, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. James Cran and Miss Ann Widdecombe.

Burglar Alarms (Control)

Mr. Hugo Summerson accordingly presented a Bill to regulate the manufacture of burglar alarms to ensure that they do not ring for more than thirty minutes after being set off: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 136].

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses Nos. 1, 32, 33, 44, 51 and 138)
Considered in Committee

Mr. Harold Walker *in the Chair.*
Ordered,

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Finance Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 51, Clause 33, Clause 32, Clause 44, Clause 138, Clause 1.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 51

RELIEF

3.42 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move, amendment No. 18, in page 39, line 7 leave out 'on or after 6th April 1990'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 19; in page 39, line 9 leave out '(whenever issued)' and insert

'issued on or after 6th April 1990'.

No. 20, in page 39, line 9, at end insert—

'(aa) the individual making the payment has not entered into any other contract of private medical insurance prior to 6th April 1990.'.

Mr. Beith: The amendments address themselves to the issue of tax relief for private health insurance, one of the most widely trailed features of the Bill, which the Government expected to be greeted with widespread enthusiasm. I see no sign of that enthusiasm but I see it adding even more to the depression among many people working in the National Health Service about the Government's attitude to the entire service. I see it as a further demonstration that the National Health Service is far from being safe in the hands of the Prime Minister.

The amendments are designed to test the purpose of the new tax relief and to discover whether it is intended to open the door to an ever widening opt-out system in which more and more people are encouraged to believe that the only way to get reliable health provision is to buy their way out of the Health Service. In their reply to the amendments, perhaps Ministers will clarify the position.

At a time of such anxiety about the financing of the National Health Service, who but this Government would have chosen to devote at least £40 million immediately this year to tax relief for private health insurance? When the National Health Service is in such crisis, who but this Government would have diverted funds immediately to the private sector?

The crisis in the Health Service is partly but not entirely of the Government's making. Some of it relates to demographic change; to the increasing number of elderly people with which the Health Service must cope and the widening range of treatments now available for the illnesses and conditions from which those elderly people suffer. That crisis demands greater public funding, as successive reports of House of Commons Select Committees, including the Social Services Select Committee and the Treasury Select Committee, emphasised. Even the Government's most ardent supporters in the Health Service—it is quite hard nowadays to find Government supporters anywhere in the Health Service—remain as anxious as ever, despite the new funds to which the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will no doubt refer, because those funds have not kept pace with the growing need that the Health Service faces and the higher rate of inflation from which it suffers through the commodities that it has to buy.

3.45 pm

Where did the proposal for such substantial expenditure on private health insurance originate? It did not come from within the National Health Service, where it is hard to find anyone who welcomes or is enthusiastic about the idea. Nor did it come from the House of Commons Social Services Select Committee which said in its fifth report:

"In our judgment, the creation of new tax subsidy on all private health insurance cannot be demonstrated to extend total availability of health care. It would reduce the total public expenditure from which Health Service resources are drawn while at the same time narrowing the tax base still further."

That is a clear recognition of the force of the arguments against such a proposal.

The proposal did not come from the National Health Service and it did not come from those Members of Parliament who take the closest and most careful interest in the National Health Service. It did not come from the Treasury Ministers who have to defend these clauses today. All the smoke signals from the Treasury were that Treasury Ministers were strongly opposed to the use of tax relief to encourage private health insurance and would regard it as a departure from their stated policy of broadening the tax base and reducing the rate of tax. The Government's declared policy on income tax is surely that the base for that should be as wide as possible and that the rate of tax should be as low as possible. Yet in this measure they are specifically narrowing the tax base and departing from their crusade against all tax breaks and tax incentives. It would be interesting to hear today whether they intend to abandon their crusade and return to an era of widespread tax relief and a narrower tax base or whether they have had to swallow one single inconsistent policy because the Prime Minister insisted on it.

The basis of the proposal is the Dulwich factor, the Prime Minister's view of retirement and old age, which is that the best way to health care is to opt out and therefore that should be subsidised and encouraged.

That leads one to question the purpose of the provisions in the minds of the Treasury Ministers. The amendments test the proposals by arguing that tax relief should not be granted to existing holders of private health insurance. It is necessary that we establish whether the measure is intended to be a growing provision for a widening number of people encouraged to opt out of the National Health Service, or whether it is what Treasury Ministers have recently said it is. I listened with some fascination to the Chief Secretary when he answered questions last Thursday. When he was pressed to give his view of the proposals he replied:

"In a ringfence way it will help many elderly people who wish to continue medical insurance cover on retirement but who are unable to do so because they have lost the benefit of the employer scheme. At the moment of retirement their

[Mr. Beith]

income tends to fall and their premium tends to rise. We are seeking to retain the capacity for these people to sustain and retain the medical insurance they have previously had. That is entirely fair and reasonable, and I support it thoroughly." —[*Official Report*, 4 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 351.]

I have heard of proposals being damned with faint praise, but that takes the prize for the faintest praise I have heard in a long time. The Chief Secretary was saying that the Government's proposal was nothing that the Prime Minister had in mind and that it was not an attempt to encourage large numbers of people to take up private health insurance, but was for those who had already found themselves in employer-based, employer-funded schemes and who, when they retired, had to decide whether to stay in the scheme. Such schemes become expensive, because at retirement age, people have to pay their own premiums and they are in the age bracket at which premiums are higher. For such people alone, the Chief Secretary seemed to imply, the Government were making special provisions. That is not what clause 51 says and it appears to be intended to be much wider. The Chief Secretary's view seemed to be attempting to find something in the Government's proposals that he could support with a modicum of enthusiasm. He will have to go much further tonight, unless his promotion chances are to be restricted, because he will have to say that he welcomes the proposal in its entirety and not only that small part he singled out when answering questions.

The proposal goes wider. It is part of the route to a two-tier Health Service, in which the better-off do not depend on the public provision. It will undermine the essential principles of the National Health Service, which one of my predecessors as Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed, William Beveridge, laid down and which were implemented by the Labour Government in the years immediately after the war. There was the principle of a universal service, available free to all at the point of delivery and which should not require people to take out private insurance to provide for their essential health needs. There is no reason why people should not make provision for whatever they wish, whether health, leisure or a more comfortable retirement, out of their own taxed income. However, there is no reason why the generality of taxpayers, many of whom are struggling hard to make ends meet, should subsidise those who make the choice to have health provision outside the National Health Service. Those who have been called on to subsidise such provision are often those in the greatest need. That is an argument that Ministers are fond of using themselves against many aspects of public expenditure, but they seem unwilling to use it when it comes to the hard-pressed taxpayers at low levels of income subsidising those who are well-off enough to engage in private health insurance.

The provision will bring into the Health Service a further degree of inequity and it will benefit the richer pensioners because it will apply not only to the standard rate of tax, but to those on higher rates, who can claim relief at a higher level at the expense of the ordinary taxpayer. The cost of the provision is open-ended, but is likely to become expensive. I do not know how the Government made an estimate, but they have estimated that in the first year, the cost will be £40 million. That is the basic cost of giving relief to those already insured, who without any incentive have seen fit to take out private health insurance. They have made a free choice to do so as they are entitled to do. The Government propose to reward those people with a subsidy of £40 million, although the money could better have been used in the Health Service itself.

Amendment No. 18 seeks to take away that element of cost by not providing tax relief for those who are already insured. As the number of pensioners with private medical insurance plans increases, both because of the increasing number of elderly people and because of the increasing proportion of those retiring who have been in company schemes, the cost could escalate considerably, which I presume is the Government's intention. What incentive will there be for private medical insurance firms to control costs when tax relief will make the premiums cheaper? As relief becomes more expensive and more widely enjoyed, Treasury Ministers know that it will become progressively more difficult to restrict and even more difficult to remove.

The Government's argument is that the provision will relieve pressure on the National Health Service. That argument is not even supported by those most closely involved in the health insurance industry. The *Investors Chronicle* analysed the benefits to be obtained from taking advantage of the tax relief and concluded:

"private medical insurance should not be regarded as a substitute for the NHS, since it does not provide an emergency ambulance service or cover long-term hospital care."

The article goes on to say:

"BUPA, the leading medical insurer with about 60 per cent. of the market, defines treatment as 'surgical or medical procedures the sole purpose of which is the cure or relief of . . . illness or injury'. This excludes chronic illnesses such as cancer and on-going treatment such as renal dialysis. Most insurers do not cover alcoholism or psychiatric problems". The publication then lists a number of other problems not covered by private health insurance.

Private health cover is likely to take up those parts of the National Health Service that can be made profitable rather than those which cannot, by their very nature, be made profitable, such as after-care, community care, preventive medicine and the long-term treatment of conditions such as senile dementia, which is now a great problem for many elderly people. For all those things, most people will continue to depend on the National Health Service and the Health Service will pick up many of the after-care costs associated with treatments covered by private health insurance.

Even though the private sector may succeed in adding to the total of treatment carried out—one can only welcome any additional treatment that it secures—all health experience suggests that it will still give rise to more dependence on the National Health Service. There is no escaping the fact that any diversion of money into the private sector will not help the NHS with its problems but instead will make them infinitely worse. I simply do not understand how Treasury and Health Ministers can blind themselves to that fact—unless it is simply that the Prime Minister has power to override all reasoned argument in her Government.

There are 12 million people over 60, and the number is growing. Of those, 600,000 have so far chosen to invest in private health cover. It is costing £40 million to subsidise that 5 per cent. and it will cost perhaps £200 million to subsidise 25 per cent. of eligible pensioners. That constitutes a large and growing diversion of funds from the NHS, which it is in no position to afford. All over the

country, hospitals are crying out for staff—the continuity of resources that will enable them to staff facilities that already exist. As Ministers go round opening glossy new hospitals, they should be aware that such hospitals do not add up to much if they cannot be staffed and cannot provide the services that they are designed to provide. The funds that are to be diverted in this way could have helped to keep existing facilities going and to improve them.

The amendment would remove that first year burden. I have tabled it as someone who is wholly opposed to the principle of a public subsidy going to private health insurers. In seeking the support of the Committee for the amendment, I also seek its support in opposing the principle of money that is desperately needed in the Health Service being channelled into private health insurance, when those who wish to choose that insurance can already do so freely and need no public subsidy to encourage them.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has started what I suspect will be a long march through the Committee stage of the Bill—both in Committee of the whole House and in Standing Committee. Although the hon. Gentleman argued against the principle of tax relief, amendments Nos. 18, 19 and 20 admit that principle and simply seek to limit the deadweight cost at the time of its introduction. If the hon. Gentleman will permit me to say so, I think that there is an inconsistency in his approach.

Amendments Nos. 18 and 19 are essentially paving amendments for amendment No. 20, which deals with the substance of the hon. Gentleman's concern, although I think that many of his remarks of principle trespass somewhat on the next group of amendments, which I expect to be widely debated. I know that many hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will wish to debate further the principle of tax relief when we reach that group.

The effect of the amendments of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed would be to rule out any tax relief for people who are now, or who ever have been, covered by private medical insurance. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about deadweight cost, although on this occasion it is misplaced. I hope to show the hon. Gentleman that the effect of his amendments goes a good deal further than he intended and further, perhaps, on reflection, than he would think is desirable.

4 pm

I believe it is clear that the central point of the concern of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed was the deadweight cost. It is inevitable with relief of this kind that, on its introduction, a significant proportion of the cost of relief will go to those who have already taken out private medical insurance, often at some personal sacrifice. However, it would be neither just, fair nor practical to discriminate against those who are already covered by medical insurance in that way. If we believe that tax relief is merited—I do, although the hon. Gentleman does not—such a discrimination would be entirely unacceptable. Those people thus discriminated against would feel—I think with some justice—that they were being penalised simply because they had had the foresight to make provision for their future needs, and in that they would be right. On reflection, the hon. Gentleman may not wish to do that.

I expect the new relief in later years to go increasingly to people who in retirement would not otherwise have had insurance cover. The deadweight cost, therefore, is not likely to run through in the future. It is those people who are the principal target for the new ring-fenced and limited relief proposed in the clause. By how much and how speedily that benefit will build up will depend on the rate at which the take-up of medical insurance increases over the next few years. That, too, is dependent upon uncertanties. To a large extent, it will depend on the way in which the marked is developed by the medical insurers.

I have already said to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed that his amendments go further than he intended. They do so because they have unwelcome side effects, which I hope may encourage the hon. Gentleman to withdraw them at the conclusion of the debate. First, they would act against the main objective of the proposal, which is—I reiterate in essence what I said the other day—to encourage those who have had medical insurance cover during their working lives to continue it in retirement. Many working people enter into medical insurance contracts, usually known as "group schemes", where their employer negotiates the insurance cover on behalf of his employees as a whole. Premiums are usually significantly less than for cover taken out on an individual basis, and in many cases, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the employer subsidises the cost.

Individuals in such schemes, who bear part or all of the cost of medical insurance during their working lives, were intended to benefit from the relief when they retire, just as much as individuals whose insurance cover is wholly provided by their employer. But the amendments of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed would draw a distinction between the two categories. Those who had a contract to make a contribution towards the cost would be debarred from the new relief on retirement, whereas those who had no contract, probably because the whole of the cost was borne by their employer during their working lives, would be eligible for the relief. Whatever other view the hon. Gentleman may have on the general principle, I am sure that he will recognise that that sort of discrimination could not be justified. I do not believe either that that is what the hon. Gentleman intended when he tabled his amendments.

Mr. Beith: The Minister is basing his argument on the case that he advanced at Question Time on Thursday, that the relief is intended to provide for those who had already entered either into a contract or some form of health insurance—I appreciate that there may be a technical difference—with their employers prior to retirement, and who then found it difficult to maintain their contracts after they retired. If that is the case, why is the clause so wide? Why is it not confined to such people?

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed is misrepresenting what I said. In answering questions the other day, I was referring to the people who had difficulty on retirement and to whose difficulty the clause was especially addressed. In no sense was I seeking to circumscribe the relief solely to those people. Other people may wish to take advantage of the relief and that is a decision for them but it is in respect of those people who face the particular hardship that we feel that the clause will go some way to putting right.

[Mr. Major]

The second drawback of the amendments is that they would discourage people who are thinking of taking out medical insurance cover before next April. That cannot be justified and I suspect that the hon. Gentleman had not intended that effect when he tabled his amendments.

On the hon. Gentleman's central point, the amendments would have the effect of limiting the deadweight cost of the scheme to a negligible level in 1990-91 as, of course, the hon. Gentleman intended. The great majority of the £40 million cost in 1990-91 will be spent in giving tax relief to those over-60s who have already taken out medical insurance cover. That is the inevitable deadweight cost which, as I conceded a moment ago, is unavoidable with the introduction of a new relief of this sort. However, when considering the deadweight cost, one must bear in mind that it will help many of those people to retain their cover and not to surrender it in the future as some may have found necessary.

It is correct that only a small proportion of the initial £40 million relates to additional take-up as a result of the relief. However, the costing assumes an increase in take-up of about 10 per cent. in the first year from around the 600,000 who are covered at present to around 660,000. The hon. Gentleman's amendments do not limit the relief to those who do not have insurance cover now, but to those who have never had insurance cover at any stage in their lives. Therefore, the amendments would effectively limit the take-up of tax relief contracts to well below the 60,000 additional take-up that we envisaged. In practice, that would mean that any elderly person who had never had insurance cover would be ineligible for the relief, even on a wholly new contract taken out in retirement. Quite apart from the hon. Gentleman's objection in principle to tax relief, such discrimination between people taking out new insurance contracts is not logical and could not be justified under any premise.

I hope that for those reasons—and as the issue of principle remains for us to debate later—the hon. Gentleman will realise that the amendments are defective and do not meet the underlying objectives that he had in mind and I hope that he will feel able to withdraw them. However, if he feels unable to withdraw them, I shall advise my hon. Friends to vote against them.

Mr. Beith: I am glad that the Treasury's capacity for detecting hidden snags in proposals has increased since last year when the Chancellor brought forward his mortgage interest relief changes which were postponed until August with such dramatic consequences. I hope that he had the benefit then—but perhaps he did not and that is why he did it—of such detailed advice of the unintended side-effects of such amendments.

The Minister seems unable to see the wood for the trees because throughout our discussion he has seemed unwilling to clarify the essential purpose of this legislation. Amendment No. 18 goes to the heart of that matter and identifies the very group of people on whom the Minister wishes to concentrate relief and would deny them the relief. That gives us an opportunity of finding out what the Minister really thinks about this. The Minister has sought again and again to suggest that the main purpose of the clause is to concentrate relief on a group of people who have already entered into medical insurance but who find it difficult to continue with it when they have retired. He has also suggested that all but 10 per cent. of the cost in the first year will go to such people rather than to people who come new into private health insurance. If that is the object of the exercise, the Government should have put a different clause into the Bill.

Treasury Ministers are hiding behind a slender tree—there are not many trees that the Chancellor could hide behind even if he tried—when they seek to pretend that the whole purpose of the clause is to help a few pensioners who entered employer-based schemes for health insurance before their retirement. Its purpose is to have a large and expanding opt-out from the National Health Service. It is the first step towards a two-tier Health Service.

I accept that there are technical defects in the amendments and I therefore propose to invite my right hon. and hon. Friend to vote against the principle of the clause at a later stage. I therefore beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 39, line 7, leave out '1990' and insert '1993'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 8, in page 39, line 45, leave out from 'claim' to 'deducted' in line 46 and insert

'set off against its profits liable to tax the amount.'.

No. 21, in page 40, line 23, at end add—

'(10) Relief under this section shall be given at the basic rate of income tax only.'.

Mr. Brown: The amendments do not seek merely to limit the scope of private health insurance tax reliefs but prevent them from being implemented until after the next general election, the result of which will show clearly what the country wants done about this matter. On the Treasury's admission, the proposal will cost at least £40 million this year. That money will go, mainly to top rate taxpayers. The Chancellor has already admitted that at least half of it will go to the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers. As the Chief Secretary has just admitted, the majority will go to those who already have private medical insurance, and beyond that, the cash available is open-ended. Under the proposal, the number of pensioners eligible for relief is uncapped. Despite the claim last Thursday in Treasury Question Time that it would be ring-fenced, I shall show that the clause even includes 900,000 people who are not pensioners. The amounts on offer in tax relief are limitless. The proposal is inflationary and liable to push up Health Service costs without controlling them at all.

It will provide an unjustifiable subsidy of incalculable cost and completely unproven value. The proposal does not suggest that the Health Service should buy operations or services from the private sector and the industries within it, but that a minority of people over 60 should have a minority of their operations and treatments subsidised when they are carried out in the private sector. The main effect of the proposal is that a monthly, three-monthly or yearly cheque will go to BUPA, Private Patients Plan and other private health insurance industries. That cheque will be paid straight from the Government to BUPA and the other organisations.

We already know that the private health industry is subsidised by the Government. Employers can set the expenditure on private medical insurance against their tax

bills and people with salaries below £8,500 can avoid paying tax on private medical insurance. We know that the Government have set a limit on the amount of new investment that they will put into the Health Service and that there is a limit on the amount of money that they will give to the hospital service this year. They have set a limit on the amount of money to be used for new buildings and equipment. However, there is no limit on the subsidy that is given to the private sector in such an open-ended way. The scheme contains no rate-capping equivalent for BUPA, no cash limit for private medical insurance, and no cash ceiling is imposed by the Chancellor. It is an open-ended subsidy in which commercial medicine receives a signed cheque and effectively writes in the sum.

It is not surprising that the proposal has not been defended by the Chancellor in any meaningful way. It was not even mentioned by him in his Budget Statement, even though it has appeared in the Finance Bill. On Second Reading of the Finance Bill, the Chief Secretary said that the proposal had achieved "a false importance." At no point has the Treasury given the scheme anything other than lukewarm endorsement.

The reason for this is clear. It is a proposal which comes not from the Chancellor, Chief Secretary or Treasury, but from the Prime Minister. The proposal offends every Treasury principle. It is open-ended and uncapped, and it starts with a huge deadweight of people who already buy private medical insurance and who, therefore, will receive subsidies. It offends the Chancellor's own proposals for the simplification of the tax system.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Gentleman said that there was no cash limit on this tax relief. Can he name one tax relief that is cash-limited?

Mr. Brown: The question that we are debating this evening is whether we should give open-ended subsidies. I think that the hon. Gentleman is genuinely worried about the scheme. He has already said:

"What worries me is the deadweight cost of relief for all those elderly people who already buy private medicine without incentives. It is a subsidy to the private sector paid for by all taxpayers. If we don't stop here then it may spread to other fields such as independent schools."

If the hon. Gentleman wants to pursue his objections to this open-ended subsidy and to prevent it from escalating into other areas, he would do well to support us in the Lobby this evening. I hope that other Conservative Members who have already expressed severe doubts about the advisability of the scheme will join him in opposing it this evening.

4.15 pm

I said that this offended Treasury principles. The Chancellor said in his 1988 Budget speech that the objective behind his tax reforms was to sweep away tax breaks. Yet, this is the introduction of a new tax break —as we had last year—which is even more unjustifiable than some of the tax breaks he is trying to sweep away. It is hardly supported by the Department of Health, either. It was barely mentioned in the Health Service review. It is not mentioned seriously in the working papers, or covered in the £1 million advertising campaign that the Health Secretary launched. The new Tory campaign guide, published only a few days ago, contains 15 pages on the National Health Service and only one sentence on this private medical insurance proposal. It is the proposal that dares not speak its name.

Perhaps the best idea of the Health Secretary's views on this matter was given when he became Secretary of State for Health in July and the proposal was first floated. I quote from an interview that he gave and which was mentioned in *The Independent* on 27 July 1988. Speaking on private medical insurance, he said:

"You don't need it. We have a National Health Service."

It is not surprising that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) is not the only Conservative Back Bencher who is unhappy about the proposal. I have noted from the debates on this matter that the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) has opposed the proposal and that the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) is very unhappy about it. I believe that more Conservative Members, some of whom will have absented themselves today, are unhappy about it.

In the Finance Bill debate that we held only a week or two ago, apart from the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), whose excuse is that he has had no research assistance to help him for some time, the only person who spoke in support of the private medical insurance proposal was the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman). He declared an interest in the form of his connection with a company called Denplan which led him to believe not only that the proposal should go ahead but that it should include insurance for dental treatment and operations. So the one Conservative Member who has spoken up strongly in the debate on this matter has had to declare an interest in it.

This proposal was not in the manifestos of 1979, 1983 or 1987. It was never mentioned to the public as a possibility before it was thrust upon us as a result of the Health Service review, and the reason why is clear; it has neither the support of the Health Department nor a great deal of support in the Treasury. In the battle between the Chancellor and the Prime Minister over the garden wall at No. 10, the shriller voice was the more successful. The Chancellor's opposition on behalf of established Treasury principles was shouted down.

Of course, there was a promise of consultation on the Health Service reforms. In January, when the Secretary of State for Health announced the reforms he said:

"We will be consulting . . . we shall, of course, listen particularly to the views of the public and the patients."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1989; Vol. 146, c. 173-174.]

But there has been no consultation on this proposal, as the Chief Secretary well knows. There has been a review that was not independent or impartial and which never included a doctor, a nurse, or even a patient. It was staffed mainly by people who use the National Health Service only when the private sector fails them. Within a few weeks of the promise of consultation, this clause is being imposed without consultation, without full information, and even without—as yet—the publication of the regulations which allow us to judge how far the proposal will go.

The only consultations held in the past few weeks have been with the private health industry. So keen are the Government to push the proposal ahead that the one group with which they have been prepared to consult has been the private health insurance industry.

Never before has such a significant change been made in the principles underlying the National Health Service with so little consultation. Faced with a choice between listening to patients and doctors in the National Health

[Mr. Brown]

Service and listening to their friends in business, the Government listen to their friends in the City and in business, first time and every time.

So keen are the Government to push this proposal through that they have made it a subsidy which is paid directly, through the cost being reduced, to the person with private medical insurance.

I have examined the housing benefit forms that have been devised by the Government since the reform of social security. When pensioners want housing benefit, they must first obtain a form, fill it in, carefully read the detailed questions and supply the necessary information about their income, the income of people staying in the house and the details of savings and capital. They must be open about every bit of cash in their possession. All of that must be done to obtain a minimal amount of housing benefit.

On the other hand, to get this private medical insurance tax relief, people need only wait for the private medical insurance industry to give it to them. The Treasury has made it that easy for people to obtain it. But the means-testing that is done for housing benefit, poll tax rebate and everything else is such that for pensioners it is a huge hurdle to overcome.

Whatever the Government claim, this subsidy—and it is a subsidy—will go to a minority of pensioners for a minority of treatment and operations. The best way to relieve pressure on the NHS—the test which the Government say they are imposing—is not to give money to private health services but to give it directly to the NHS.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The hon. Gentleman referred pejoratively to my Second Reading speech. He may not be aware that my main point was that the benefit coming from this tax relief will directly benefit health care. Whatever money is given by way of tax relief will represent an addition to the resources that go to health care in Britain.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. Three Members of the Cabinet are over 60. They will enjoy a subsidy on their private medical insurance policies. They will get that relief without even having to claim it. The only claim they will need to make will be in respect of the top rate tax relief, but they will get the basic rate relief automatically.

I have in my constituency a number of people on NHS waiting lists waiting, for example, for cataract and hip joint operations. The Government have made a choice between giving additional money to the NHS, to people who need it, and giving the money to people with private medical insurance policies, people who do not need it.

Mr. Couchman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that those on NHS waiting lists will benefit as a result of people taking their ills to the private sector?

Mr. Brown: If what the Government propose goes ahead, those in the queue will be subsidising the queue-jumpers. If the Government want to use £40 million or more of resources to the best effect to help people on waiting lists, the most cost-effective way of doing that would be not to give it to BUPA and other similar bodies, but to give it to the NHS.

Mr. Couchman: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that £40 million of tax relief, even at the top rate of tax, would result in £100 million worth of additional resources going to health care?

Mr. Brown: I do not accept that. I assume that the same point will be made by the Chief Secretary. That £40 million will not go to pay for operations and hospital treatments. The hon. Member for Gillingham knows that because he has been advocating Denplan as an insurance scheme. The money will go to pay for the administration and marketing of BUPA and other schemes, and not necessarily towards improving the quality of health care.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Does my hon. Friend agree that Mr. David Lock, the managing director of Private Patients Plan, gave the game away when he asked the Government:

"Please do not ignore the incentives which would encourage patients to provide for themselves and their families and reduce government expenditure on the NHS"?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Not only have many people in the private health industry given the game away, but almost every organisation associated with the NHS—the Royal College of Nursing and others—has come out against the plan.

Only a few days ago the Chief Secretary, in support of the Budget, quoted comments from Help the Aged, saying that it gave an unqualified welcome to the proposals in the Budget. But I have to tell him that only today it has said that the proposals being put forward for private medical insurance tax relief are a complete irrelevance. The same has been said by Age Concern and many other organisations.

The Chief Secretary may also like to know that the Centre for Policy Studies, the Right-wing organisation that the Prime Minister helped to set up some years ago, has not come out in support of the plan. It has advocated that the plan should not be proceeded with. It said:

"It would be wrong to give it tax relief . . . The US system of private health insurance came close to collapse because nobody has responsibility for managing health costs. This mistake should not be repeated here."

It goes on to give three additional reasons why it believes that private medical insurance tax relief should not be operated.

Mr. Eindhoven, an American research scientist, has been given a great deal of credit for developing the proposals for the internal market on which the Health Minister and the Prime Minister have based their plans. Only a few days ago, in an interview to the *British Medical Journal* he was asked:

"Were there no specific points"—

in the Health Service review—

"that made you think 'my goodness?'"

Mr. Eindhoven said:

"The only thing like that was the proposal of tax relief for private health insurance. My reaction to that is watch out. This has been a disaster for us in the States."

He was asked why, and he said:

"Because it costs the federal budget a great deal of money —about $40 billion a year—and works to encourage the choice of a more costly rather than a less costly health scheme."

Others have made exactly that sort of comment on the proposal. There is no support from the Health Service, there is no support on the basis of established Treasury principles, and there is little support even from some people in the private medical insurance industry.

There are good reasons why the country should be opposed to the scheme.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman has a reputation for being an ex-student leader, so obviously at some stage in his life he was educated. Therefore, why cannot the hon. Gentleman understand that if the Government provide an incentive for health insurance more people will take it out, enabling more people to obtain their health care elsewhere, and freeing resources in the NHS for his constituents and my constituents and adding to the increasing resources that the Government have already put in to the Health Service?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman fails to understand the drift of the argument. The Opposition argue that if the Government have £40 million—this also happens to be the argument of any serious person who has looked at the issue—the best and most economical way to use those resources to provide health care is not through a subsidy to the private medical insurance industry or people who take out private medical insurance, but to use them in the NHS. The hon. Gentleman has been unable by his question to persuade us that he has any case for the point of view that he has put forward.

The problem is that we are not just talking about £40 million going in tax relief to private medical insurance; This is £40 million as a start that is going to a small number of people who are already rich enough to afford that private medical insurance in the first place.

Doubtless one or two people in the lower income group will benefit from the scheme, but we know that half the cost of the first year of relief will go to the top 5 per cent. of pensioners—people who are already rich enough to afford private medical insurance and who already have massive tax relief from the Government in many other areas.

4.30 pm

Even those people, who have benefited so much, would say that if the Government had wished to give to pensioners the first priority should have been to do something about housing benefit cuts, eyesight and dental check-up charges, and low poll tax and rate rebates—all things that they know have done damage not just to individual pensioners but to the integrity of our community life in this country.

The Chief Secretary tells us that the aim of this scheme is to help a number of elderly people who have had their private medical insurance through their companies all their working life and will be unable to afford to continue it after the age of 60. Somehow, he tells us, a priority for public spending resources in this country should be that a small group of people who have had private medical insurance as a perk from the company during their working life should now receive from the taxpayer additional resources to pay for their health care.

I have had dozens of constituents come to see me about the freezing of transitional protection. I have had scores of constituents complaining about the implementation of charges for eyesight tests and dental check-ups and rising prescription charges. I have had hundreds of constituents worried about cuts in housing benefit. I have not received one constituent inquiry from someone worried about this tax relief for pensioners. Those people who argue the case for private medical insurance tax relief must bear in mind that the people most in need of resources from the Government are not those rich enough to afford private medical insurance but those whom the Government have made poor as a result of housing benefit and other cuts.

Our objections to this tax relief go beyond that. It is not just that only a few at the top are liable to benefit; it is that this subsidy is open-ended. The Chief Secretary has not yet told the House, and it has not been in the public arena to the extent that it should have, that this tax relief proposal is not just open to people over 60. There are 900,000 people under 60 who will be entitled to receive the benefit of this tax relief because they are married to people over 60 and their policies will be covered by the tax relief as well. That is another reason why this scheme is not ring-fenced, as the Chief Secretary says; it is open to another group of people, as high a figure as nearly 1 million of them, throughout the country.

Mr. Beith: There is an even larger potential group of people who can also benefit from high-rate tax relief. Any relative who cares to pay the premiums for a pensioner to whom he is related can get the highest rate of tax relief in that way.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out in his second intervention this afternoon. BUPA itself has said that this scheme will be used by what it calls yuppies—people with high salaries who buy private medical insurance as a present for their elderly parents. I have to ask the Chief Secretary whether he thinks it is a proper use of public sector resources to subsidise gifts of this sort.

As to the question whether the subsidy is open-ended, I was interested in what the Financial Secretary said when he dealt with this matter. He said that he could not tell us what the costs of this scheme would be—rather like the Chief Secretary this afternoon. So we have the Treasury entering into a scheme without knowing what the cost will be. Then he said that the costs depended on meeting the new marketing challenge. The question was how much BUPA and other private sector organisations would meet the marketing challenge. So the resources devoted to this scheme are not to be decided on the basis of the needs of pensioners or the needs for health care throughout the country; they are to be decided by the extent to which BUPA meets the new marketing challenge. It is the advertising budgets of Saatchi and Saatchi that will decide the take-up of the scheme rather than the real needs of pensioners throughout the country.

I will tell the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary how these resources could be better used. The £40 million, if it is really £40 million, that is being devoted this year to private medical insurance would pay for 3,000 nurses, 1,000 consultants, 20,000 ventilators, 1,300 ambulances or nearly 20,000 hip-joint replacement operations. But the money will not go to guarantee any operations or treatments; it will merely go to provide tax relief on insurance money that is paid out to companies such as BUPA.

What will BUPA and similar organisations be able to do for pensioners with the money that is given in the form of subsidies to those who subscribe to private medical care? People who have had illnesses or even symptoms in the past cannot, when they are aged over 60, obtain private medical insurance in many cases. Policies will not anyway cover the mentally ill or those requiring psychiatric care, the physically or mentally handicapped, or those suffering

[Mr. Brown]

from long-term conditions such as cancer. So that money will be used to subsidise a minority of people undergoing a minority of treatments, and almost certainly a minority of the operations that they really need. Is that the best use of £40 million or more of public sector resources?

Much of that money will be spent on administration. We know that about 6 per cent. of National Health Service costs and 5 per cent. of hospital costs are accounted for by administration. However, we know also that 10 per cent. of BUPA's costs are accounted for by administration, and that the figure is 12 per cent. in the case of Private Patients Plan. That is hardly cause for arguing that money is better spent in the inefficient private sector. The private sector under BUPA is the most inefficient of all.

The cost of a hernia operation in the private sector is more than twice the National Health Service figure, as is that of a hip joint replacement. Operations as simple as cataract removal also cost twice as much in the private sector. The Government support the private sector not because it is efficient but simply because it is the private sector. They oppose extra funds for the public sector not because it is inefficient but simply because it is the public sector. The Government prefer to subsidise an inefficient private sector rather than support an efficient public sector.

The Prime Minister herself, even though she supports the private sector, acknowledges that the coverage it can give is inadequate in respect of major operations. She commented:

"The day may come when we"—

she uses the term "we" again—

"have to have a very complicated operation. I hope not. I hope it will never come. But if it does, then I am afraid that one could not possibly perhaps bear that on private insurance."

Those are the words of the Prime Minister, who is the greatest supporter of private medical insurance and the author of the subsidy—but she recognises that no matter how large the resources she gives to private medicine to try to make it function more efficiently and encourage more people to subscribe to it, at the end of the day the private sector is unable to do the job if a major operation is required.

The National Association of Health Authorities today published a new survey of Health Service finances, which reveals very clearly the remaining backlog. The survey claims that since 1980 the Government have underfunded the National Health Service by £3 billion. Last year underfunding was of the order of £400 million, as it was the year before that. Despite all the claims made by the Chief Secretary and other Ministers as to the huge resources that they made available to the Health Service this year, the hospital and community health services remain underfunded by £490 million.

On the same day as that survey is published, the House is asked to divert to the private sector money that should go to the Health Service. All health arguments and all traditional Treasury arguments have been set aside. The only question asked by the Prime Minister was what could be done for the private sector, and how could the rich be helped to help themselves.

We now know what the Chancellor meant when he gave that unintended interview to the correspondents on that Friday last year which caused so much embarrassment. He said then that he wanted to target benefits to pensioners, that only a tiny minority of pensioners concerned him; what he did not say was that the tiny minority were not the poorest in the land but the richest and that the targeting was to be on the richest, not the poorest.

This proposal has been rejected by almost everyone who has looked at it. It commands very little support, even on the Minister's Back Benches. It is objected to by all health organisations which have looked at it. It is even rejected by many of the Right-wing think-tanks which the Minister knows are the authors of many of the worst proposals for the National Health Service. Yet Ministers and the Government have made a choice between giving Health Service resources to those who need them and to those who do not. They have chosen to give these resources to those who do not need them. That is why we will oppose the proposal this evening.

Mr. Major: In moving his amendment, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Gordon Brown) was typically forceful, and it might be appropriate at the beginning of what I suspect will be a lengthy and interesting debate to set out the background and concerns to the proposal to introduce tax relief and the secure justification we believe exists for it.

As I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said, I found it hard to appreciate that we are discussing tax relief for a limited number of elderly people rather than, as his dramatic delivery would have led us to believe, the ritual slaughter of the first born. It is curious that on all other occasions when assistance for the elderly has been suggested—and a lot of assistance for the elderly has been introduced under this Government—the Opposition tend to support it but on this occasion, for rather curious reasons, which I will come to later—*[Interruption.]* Not the rich elderly, as hon. Members will find out in a moment. I fear the hon. Gentleman has the measure rather out of perspective, though the manner in which he presented his case will enable elderly people who enjoy tax relief and who may enjoy tax relief to put the Opposition very clearly in perspective.

In the course of his remarks the hon. Gentleman made a number of errors of substance, to which I shall return. There were a number of minor errors, which I simply correct in a spirit of accuracy. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman finds accuracy funny, as we have noticed before. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor mentioned tax relief for health insurance in his Budget. The cost of £40 million which the hon. Gentleman referred to arises, of course, next year, not this year. I assume that was a just a slip of the tongue.

The position about the open-ended cheque is not at all correct. Treatments which may be covered will be specified in regulations and there is a natural limit to those. Those regulations will be available to the House at a later stage.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Major: In a moment. If the hon. Gentleman intervenes every time I point out his inaccuracies, we will still be here in the middle of August.

The hon. Gentleman is, of course, wrong about getting relief without claiming it because the application form for insurance cover will also contain the claim for tax relief. Whether the claim is made is optional. Claimants will have to certify in the normal way as to their eligibility for tax

relief, just as with mortgage interest tax relief, which to the best of my knowledge the Opposition have not yet declared it to be their intention to abolish.

The hon. Gentleman made some other errors, to which I will return when we deal with the more substantive parts of this amendment.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chief Secretary confirm whether there is a ceiling on this tax relief or not?

Mr. Major: There has never been in any tax relief of any sort the possibility of setting a cash limit. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he ought not to be the Shadow Chief Secretary, for he understands very little. As it happens, Shadow Chief Secretary is likely to be the limit of where he gets—*[Interruption.]* I am perfectly prepared to exchange badinage with the Opposition if they wish, but they may care to listen to the substance of the debate.

Amendment No. 5 would delay the introduction of tax relief on private health care provision until 1993. As the hon. Gentleman made clear, its intention is wholly different; but the effect is simply one of delay, which implies—inaccurately—that the Opposition accept the principle of tax relief and merely wish to defer it. The Opposition, however, are wholly opposed to tax relief, as any casual listener to the hon. Gentleman's tirade will have understood. The hon. Gentleman hopes that a delay beyond the end of the current Parliament will enable a new Labour Government quietly to strangle the extra help for the many elderly people who will welcome it. It will not, of course, because there will be no new Labour Government after the next general election. One of the reasons for that is Labour Members' basic and instinctive hostility to self-provision, self-dependence and individual choice, which they are showing yet again today. They hate those things; unless provision is made by the state, in their eyes it is not good.

4.45 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chief Secretary simply confirm that of that £40 million he expects at least £20 million to go to the richest people—the top 5 per cent.?

Mr. Major: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman in precise terms that the Inland Revenue's best estimate is that, in the first year of the tax relief, well over 80 per cent. of those aged over 60 and covered by medical insurance will be either basic-rate taxpayers or not liable to tax at all. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will remember that when next he makes his inaccurate speeches.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chief Secretary now answer my question? Is it or is it not the case that half the £40 million that he expects to be set aside will go to top-rate taxpayers?

Mr. Major: I do not expect that to be the case. My answer to the hon. Gentleman's question showed clearly the extent to which he either does not understand what is going on or deliberately chooses to misrepresent it. I have opted for the charitable explanation, although others, of course, may not.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Is the Chief Secretary aware that NHS provision is paid for by taxpayers and payers of national insurance? The clause merely gives extra help to a very small number of people, when those resources could be better used in the NHS.

Mr. Major: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point entirely, but we live in a society where there is a private medical sector as well as a National Health Service, whether he likes it or not. I suspect that that point is not alien to him. The private medical sector provides a good deal of care for people who would otherwise need to be treated within the NHS, which would add to the difficulties and delays that sometimes occur within it. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will permit me to get past the few first seconds of my speech, I shall explain the point directly, as it is the substance of the amendment.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Chief Secretary willing to correct his statement of a few minutes ago? Is he prepared to accept the accuracy of the answer given to me by his right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on 22 March, stating that about half the relief is expected to be received by higher-rate taxpayers?

Mr. Major: As far as I am aware, what I said a moment ago is correct: 80 per cent. of the beneficiaries will be basic-rate taxpayers. Although it is not possible to be certain about how that 80 per cent. breaks down within the total tax relief, it is clear that over a period the majority will go to basic-rate taxpayers—or indeed, as I shall explain shortly, in reduced payments for those who are not taxpayers at all. They will find, as we operate a MIRAS-type system, that the cost of their medical insurance cover is reduced by the rebatable element—25 per cent. at present—when they make their first payments under the new system. That will in our judgment grow over the years.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chief Secretary tell us whether the Financial Secretary was right or wrong? I asked on 22 March:

"what is his estimate of the proportion of the £40 million set aside for tax relief for private medical insurance that will go to top-rate taxpayers."

He replied:

"Around one half of the cost of relief is expected to be received by higher rate taxpayers."—[*Official Report*, 22 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. *588*.]

Is the Chief Secretary disowning the Financial Secretary?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is overlooking two factors. *[Interruption.]* I am just about to explain to the hon. Gentleman since he does not understand. That includes, first, the basic rate of tax relief. So only a proportion of that half to which he refers is higher rate tax relief, for they would be entitled to the basic relief in any event. *[Interruption.]* It is no good hon. Gentlemen giggling and shouting. That happens to be fact. Secondly, since 80 per cent. of the beneficiaries will be basic rate taxpayers or not taxpayers at all—I shall reiterate the point so that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East does not get it wrong again—over a period of time the majority of the tax relief will go, not to the rich, whom the Opposition claim are receiving such disproportionate amounts, but to people who are basic-rate taxpayers or not taxpayers at all. I hope the hon. Gentleman now understands the point. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) wishes to intervene instead of cackling in such an absurd fashion

[Mr. Major]

from a seated position, I shall give way to him. He is the best advertisement I have yet seen for having television in the House. Then people might see how he behaves.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Chief Secretary confirm that of those people who have private health insurance, no fewer than 50 per cent. go into a National Health Service hospital when they are sick and in need of in-patient hospital treatment, thus saving the National Health Service not a penny?

Mr. Major: As the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend pointed out a moment ago, those who have private medical health insurance will also have paid their tax and national insurance contributions, so they have the same entitlement as the hon. Gentleman, if they choose to exercise it, to use the National Health Service. If they choose to pay separately and not use the provision, that is a matter for them which ought not to concern the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): As I understood it, the Chief Secretary said that some elderly people who do not pay tax will get a benefit. Will he please explain that? I presume that most people on state pensions who do not have any other income do not pay tax. I take it that the personal allowance still covers the whole pension. Is he saying that that pensioner can deduct a sum equivalent to tax at the standard rate when making the payment of the premium, and can retain that money and not have it reclaimed by the Inland Revenue?

Mr. Major: That is entirely correct. Since a system like MIRAS will operate, someone who is not a taxpayer would have the equivalent of the basic rate refund deducted from the premium, so that person would have a lower premium than otherwise.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Could the insurance company reclaim the sum in full from the Inland Revenue?

Mr. Major: Yes, in precisely the same way as the mortgage interest relief system operates, as the right hon. Gentleman, as a former Treasury Minister, will know.

Mr. Beith: Will the Chief Secretary make it clear that the non-taxpaying pensioner will not have to sign a form when making the initial claim to say that he or she is liable to tax?

Mr. Major: I will have to check that, but I suspect that people will have to indicate that they are eligible—no, I think the answer is that they will not because the 25 per cent. would be deductible automatically in any event. If I am inaccurate about that, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman later.

One of the curiosities about the position of the Opposition, although they may not care to admit it, is that they are resolutely opposed to helping the elderly help themselves, or to helping families help the elderly, despite the general position that they take that they care and want to assist the elderly in whatever way is possible. The 5·5 million people currently covered by private medical insurance will surely notice that.

I wish to turn in a moment directly to the concerns that the hon. Gentleman raised, but I should like to say something first about private health care provision and public health provision. Although the Opposition choose not to mention it, public provision for the National Health Service has grown dramatically in recent years to deal with a variety of changes in circumstances, such as improving medical treatments, greater public expectations and demographic changes. By any realistic yardstick, the National Health Service is better funded than ever before. I, for one, have no doubt that that trend will continue, for we are determined to produce and improve public health care. The whole thrust of the health reforms has that in mind.

Where we part company with the Opposition is that we believe that support for public provision should not mean opposition to private provision, although for many—I suspect not all—Opposition Members, private provision adds to the total resources for health care and should generally be welcomed. As to provision for health care, even the Labour party yesterday committed itself to the belief that firm public expenditure control was desirable and necessary. Whether the Labour party will ever pay more than lip service to that belief, or have the chance to, is a separate matter.

I must make it clear to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who raised the point earlier, that I welcome the expansion of private health care provision. I welcome it unreservedly as one who has invariably used the National Health Service.

There is a variety of reasons for my welcome for private health care provision. First, it relieves pressure on the National Health Service. Secondly, it increases the scope for co-operation between the National Health Service and the independent sector. Thirdly, it increases individual choice, and I find that attractive. It also means, of course, a wider range of options for National Health Service management as well as individual patients.

There is already a growing partnership between the National Health Service and the independent sector. Through the reforms that we have in mind we want to open up further opportunities for the public and the private sectors to work together, providing services for each other, engaging in joint ventures, and sharing the use and spreading the cost of expensive hospital facilities. Anyone needing treatment, including those of us who continue to depend wholly on the National Health Service, can only benefit from closer co-operation, for private provision will supplement and not replace public provision in the National Health Service.

The new relief that we are debating is limited. It is not a general relief for private medical care or even for medical insurance. It is limited in scope and ring-fenced to those over 60, or, as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East accurately pointed out, the wives of those who are over 60, who also receive age allowance on exactly the same principle—unless the hon. Gentleman proposes to withdraw the age allowance in those circumstances. If he wishes to do that, I will let him admit it now; I assume that he does not. I am pleased that he is consistent and agrees with the principle.

I must make it clear to him that we have no plans to extend the relief further down the age scale. Direct payments for private health care and most medical insurance premiums for those aged under 60 will not in future attract tax relief. *[Interruption.]* Many things come forward in the debate, but I think that a reference to the dock labour scheme may stretch the Chairman's patience.

The central justification for the new relief is entirely clear. It is one that I have set out before. As people reach 60, the cost of their private medical insurance rises. If they retire, their income generally tends to fall. Of course, usually they lose employers' contributions to any private medical insurance scheme to which they may have belonged. Many elderly people think that it is grossly unfair, and for the benefit of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed I must make it clear that I agree with them without qualification. Clause 51 addresses that difficulty. The effect of the clause that the amendment seeks to wreck is that the new tax relief will be available from April 1990 where an individual aged 60 or over is covered by eligible medical insurance. It will be due where the premium is paid by the elderly themselves or where another individual pays the premium on their behalf. In most cases, that individual is likely to be a son or daughter or other close relative; but it could equally be a family friend.

5 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Minister is enunciating what I take to be a principle which he wishes the Government to spread throughout tax relief between the employed person and the retired person. He seems to be saying that it is one way of helping people belonging to company-financed health plans to continue with those plans after retirement. Does he therefore agree that that principle could apply to any other perk that a company provides, such as a company car—so that people could receive some help with having a car after they retire—or any scheme of luncheon vouchers, as retired people might need help with their meals after they retire. Is the Minister seriously trying to tell us that there is a need to provide help with perks that were received during employment when people retire?

Mr. Major: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, we know the difference between health relief and luncheon vouchers. That is why we have ring-fenced that relief specifically to people seeking some form of health or medical insurance. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, we think that that is particularly important and brings comfort to many elderly people who are keen to continue with the insurance, the protection and the cover that they enjoyed until the age of 60. It is ring-fenced to that.

Mr. Win Griffiths: That is nice to know.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman now need be in no doubt about it.

Basic rate relief will be given at source—like MIRAS to which the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) referred a moment ago—so that only a net premium will need to be paid to the insurer. That means, even where a subscriber is not liable for tax, tax relief will still be given and only a net sum will be payable.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East repeatedly referred to the fact that tax relief benefits only the rich, and I outlined the extent to which basic rate taxpayers will benefit. His belief that only the rich benefit is wholly wrong, as it is in the case of tax relief on mortgage interest. The measure brings private health care within the reach even of non-taxpayers for the reasons we have discussed in the past few minutes.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Can the Minister estimate the number of people on the basic old age pension who will take out private health insurance after this generous scheme comes in?

Mr. Major: We shall have to wait and see. But I can tell the hon. Gentleman that any pensioners who do that will find that the tax relief reduces their premium by the standard basic rate of taxation—currently 25 per cent.—in precisely the same fashion that I have set out. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman may be surprised at the number of elderly people who will take advantage of the measure. The cost of a budget policy for someone between 60 and 69 would be £240 a year. That is a budget scheme and would vary with individual insurance companies. That £240 is before the deduction of the sum covered by the tax relief.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: I am not keen to give way to the hon. Gentleman who has been chuntering like a clown throughout most of our proceedings.

Mr. Dobson: Only from a sedentary position.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is sometimes more funny than he is wise.

It is completely inaccurate and outdated to suppose that only high earners have private medical insurance, in precisely the same fashion that home ownership, largely thanks to Conservative policies, has long ceased to be the privilege of the few. About 5·5 million people—one in 10 of the population—are now covered by medical insurance, many of them through company schemes. Even trade unions are arranging group cover for their members, for, unlike the Opposition, they believe in the principle and practice of private medical health care and I have no doubt that their members, once retired, may wish to take out their own policies and benefit from the tax relief that is offered to them.

There is a further point. The type of insurance cover most generally marketed to older people, and which they are most likely to find attractive, is so-called "budget" cover. The very much lower premiums reflect retired people's priorities. For example, someone who has retired will be willing to have his non-acute operation at an off-peak time for the hospital at a lower cost. Tax relief will bring just that type of low-cost cover within reach of even more people than the 600,000 people over 60 already covered.

Mr. Dobson: Is it not true that a number of the so-called budget schemes make themselves cheap by giving pensioners a certain amount of money provided that they can find treatment at a National Health Service hospital within six weeks? How will that save money for the National Health Service?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that cash schemes are not generally covered by the tax relief, but if there are any exceptions we shall look into them.

I recognise that some hon. Members may be opposed to any tax relief, not on the grounds advanced by the Opposition, but on general fiscal policy grounds, because it contradicts strict tax neutrality principles. It does. I agree with that and there is no point in not recognising it and acknowledging it, and I do so. But we have never pretended that it is our policy to remove all tax relief

[Mr. Major]

regardless of merits. Each is considered individually. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made clear in 1984, when he introduced his first tax reform Budget, that he had no intention of removing all tax reliefs in the tax system. That is not our aim.

It is true that the general presumption is in favour of fiscal neutrality, but in practice there will always be room for some carefully-considered and limited tax incentives to meet particular needs. That is why we have introduced a number of reliefs, such as those for profit-related pay and personal equity plans, which are specifically designed to make the economy more flexible. The new relief that we are introducing for health insurance is fully justified on merit, as it is well directed at a particular problem, will increase take up and have wider benefits.

I referred earlier to the limited nature of the relief. I should make it clear that there are two restrictions on the relief apart from that imposed by the age of the insured person. First, the relief will be due only to people who are resident for tax purposes in the United Kingdom.

It is axiomatic that a tax relief should not be given to people who put themselves outside the scope of normal United Kingdom taxation. Furthermore, by and large, people who are not resident in the United Kingdom do not use the National Health Service on a regular basis; thus, encouraging them to take out medical insurance would do little to relieve pressure on the NHS. They will not therefore qualify for relief.

Secondly, the clause provides for relief to be withdrawn in certain circumstances. That is where, for example, tax relief has been given when it was not properly due, or when it was given in respect of a contract that has ceased to be eligible for relief, perhaps because its terms have varied. In those circumstances, it is right that no further relief should be given and that any excessive relief should be paid back as speedily as possible.

I hope that hon. Members will now understand what caused us to bring this measure before the House and I hope too that they will appreciate that for many elderly people this new tax relief will be widely welcomed for a considerable period.

I understand the concerns of hon. Members about this relief, but I must say bluntly that I do not share them. This modest measure will give the double benefit of peace of mind to those who are able to take up private medical insurance as a result of it and an increase in flexibility in the provision of health care, which can only benefit the National Health Service and the community as a whole. Those are both desirable policy objectives, so I invite the Committee to reject the amendment and to support the principle enunciated in clause 1.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I come to the debate with some experience in caring for the elderly in the National Health Service, because I spent 10 years of my life doing that. I also come to the debate with some trepidation. As with the elderly, every time the Government talk about improving the National Health Service, I feel some fear because in this debate, as in every other in which we see the Prime Minister's hand, we have to fight to preserve some part of that precious service. We have been in the battle of images versus the reality of the National Health Service since the Government came to office. The National Health Service is anathema to the Prime Minister. She hates it because it is a Socialist concept for which she has no time and it means caring for people collectively. I believe that it is a good and decent principle to want to care for the elderly.

I recognise the importance of this debate, and I do not under-estimate the dangers in the move towards tax relief for elderly people who take out private insurance. That will do nothing to help the vast needs of the elderly and I want to talk especially about the elderly in Calderdale. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said, the proposal has nothing to do with cost, because it is far more expensive to perform operations in the private sector and it has nothing to do with planning, in terms of surgeons' hours, nurses' time and the contribution of the Health Service workers. But the proposal has everything to do with the political will to get rid of the National Health Service or at least to weaken it seriously.

In Calderdale, my local health district, there are 36,400 pensioners. I should add that Calderdale covers my constituency and the constituency of Calder Valley. There are 10,000 pensioner households; one in four of all Calderdale households is a pensioner household. The number of over-75s in Calderdale increased by 16 per cent. between 1971 and 1981. We have the highest proportion of over-75s of any urban authority and the number of over-75s is expected to rise by one half in the next decade. You will appreciate, Mr. Hogg, why I am so concerned about what will happen to those many elderly people.

I obtained some of those figures from my local council and some from the Government. Over 5,000 of the 20,000 pensioner households receive some income support, so they are in the very lowest income bracket. Only about one third of all pensioners pay any tax. The national figure from the Government's 1986 general household survey showed that only 4 per cent. of people over 65 had private medical insurance. If that figure is applied to Calderdale, only approximately 400 pensioners out of 36,400, would benefit from the proposal. That gives us an idea of how few would benefit from the Government's tax relief.

The Chief Secretary has said that some people on low incomes, who are not in the tax bracket, will be able to purchase one of the budget schemes at about £250 a year. Again, we see the battle between image and reality. The Chief Secretary and the Government know that those people are struggling to make ends meet and that the last thing they are likely to do is pay £250 in health insurance —unless, of course, the Government are successful in frightening them into doing so.

5.15 pm

This tax relief measure will do little for the 36,400 pensioners in Calderdale district health authority. It will do nothing to help with the vital resources needed by the National Health Service. It will only help the private sector to leech off even more from the National Health Service than it is doing now. Already, the private sector is causing parts of the National Health Service to bleed to death.

The Government's policy on care for the elderly is relevant to this debate and, in some ways, that policy has been rather sinister. Over the past 10 years, we have seen a massive shut-down of long-stay beds for the elderly and a huge increase in private beds for the elderly. Billions of pounds of taxpayers' money has been pushed into the private sector, and care for the elderly is deteriorating. We have seen the massive institutionalisation of elderly

people. More and more elderly people have found themselves without adequate community care or caring relatives and have been forced into private homes. We have seen entrepreneur after entrepreneur jumping on to the granny gravy train as the Government encourage the waste of taxpayers' money.

I am deeply concerned about what will happen to the elderly who are frightened into taking out private health cover. What will happen when the insurance companies keep rewriting the small print, as they inevitably will if more elderly people take up the so-called "offer"? We shall see insurance companies redefining what is medical, as happens now when authorities seek excuses to close down long-stay beds. We are moving towards the conditions prevailing in the United States, where elderly people believe that they are going into hospital under private medical cover for acute operations but, as often happens with people over 75, that acute condition becomes chronic.

We shall see hospitals wanting to dump patients quickly whom they see as financial burdens. We shall have the dumping referred to in the excellent booklet by my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), "Your dollars or your life". It should be compulsory reading for Opposition Members. Sixty per cent. of elderly people aged between 65 and 74 have long-standing illnesses. The image of them nipping into hospital, having a conveyor belt operation and nipping out again under a cheap private insurance scheme is nonsense.

I have challenged the Minister on this subject, as only 400 of the elderly people in my health authority area are likely to derive any direct benefit from the proposal. To care for the elderly, the National Health Service needs a massive injection of cash. The £40 million that the proposal would cost would be a start, and if the Government could see their way to increasing that on a weekly basis for the next six months, we might see a return to properly funded health care.

If we are to help the elderly, we need to spend more on chiropody, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and intensive home care packages to keep elderly people in their own homes and to help them not to become chronically sick.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East said so clearly, the measure will serve only to move us towards a more divided service for the elderly. It is being pushed upon an unwilling nation by a Prime Minister who is hellbent on getting rid of the National Health Service.

A warning was sounded last week in the Vale of Glamorgan, where the Labour party achieved an excellent result. I know that the Chief Secretary is an ambitious Minister and that, like many of his colleagues, he tries to curry favour with the Prime Minister because she is king-maker at the moment, but I warn the right hon. Gentleman that he will be sounding his own death knell if he proceeds with proposals that have nothing to do with helping the elderly and everything to do with destroying the National Health Service.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I am not very happy about the clause, but before I give my reasons I want to say something about the speech made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline. East (Mr. Brown). The hon. Gentleman said that, under the clause, the queue would be subsidising the queue-jumper. I think that that encapsulates the Opposition's view of taxation. The hon. Gentleman and his party believe that resources belong to the state, not to the individual. Let me distance myself immediately from that attitude. Money does not belong to the state and tax relief does not mean giving money to those who are relieved of tax. It means taking less away. In a general sense, that is an important distinction.

The Labour party also suffers from the belief that if Governments take less away from people in tax, they make it less likely that they can increase public expenditure. As this Government's record has shown, however, if one reduces taxes in a general way, one so enhances the country's economic performance that one can increase revenue and so have more money available for public expenditure.

The Labour party believes that we have a static economy and that if we relieve someone of the burden of taxation, it means that there is less available for someone else. In fact, we have a dynamic economy, and our experience of the past 10 years amply proves that point. Everything that I have read about the Opposition's policy on taxation leads me to believe that it is more a policy of retribution than a means of raising revenue for public expenditure.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It ought to be put on record that, taking into account indirect taxation, the people of this country have been taxed more heavily under this Government. It is a myth that the Government have given taxes back; they have increased the burden of taxation.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. Norman Hogg): The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) need not feel obliged to respond to that point in any detail if he does not wish to.

Sir Peter Hordern: I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Hogg. Doubtless I need it on other occasions but I do not on this occasion. It is true that indirect taxation has increased, but so has the country's wealth, which has meant that people are more able to bear the burden of taxation placed upon them. Moreover, rates of direct taxation have been substantially reduced. But I shall go no further, Mr. Hogg, because I want to restrict my remarks to the clause and the amendment.

We need as broad a base as possible for taxation. If we are to enjoy the benefits of reductions in taxation leading to dynamism in the economy and therefore to more revenue and more public expenditure, it is essential that there should be as few exemptions from the general level of taxation as possible.

Of course, we have some exemptions from taxation—some special allowances and tax concessions. We have had them for many years. However, I would distinguish those existing tax concessions from the one proposed in the Bill. We have tax concessions to encourage people to take out pensions, for example. That principle has been established for a long time. Some may say that we allow too many tax concessions for the pension industry, and I would number myself among them. We have tax concessions for the members of the property-owning democracy, although I do not think that the limit at which mortgage interest relief is allowed will be raised in future. It has not been raised for several years, so that concession is diminishing as a force, which encourages people in the belief that the Government genuinely think that there should be as little exemption to detract from reductions in direct taxation as possible. Other tax reliefs—for the business expansion scheme, for

[Sir Peter Hordern]

example—are designed to encourage more rented accommodation or more industry, and such reliefs also serve a national purpose.

The question arises whether the concession proposed in the Bill makes for the general good and whether it should have preference over others. No one has expressed the matter better than my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Some time ago she said that any tax concession for which extra public expenditure is required has to be set against the net income of a nurse. At that time the average nurse's salary was £140 a week, and tax and national insurance contributions amounted to £40 a week. My right hon. Friend said that that was important because any tax concession has to be set against the contribution that nurses make to national insurance and in taxation, and there are a great many nurses. That is a good test, and we should bear it in mind in considering the proposal.

We should look at the evidence to see whether we need to subsidise private medical insurance. I understand that, at the end of 1987, 5·2 million people, including dependants, were covered by private health insurance. There is a distinction between the categories of those covered: 28 per cent. of people in professional classes are medically insured as compared with 7 per cent. of the people at large. The question immediately arises what the deadweight cost of the proposal will be, as the people who are already covered are hardly likely to be encouraged to take out even more cover. More to the point, the cost to the Exchequer is substantially greater than it would have been had a completely new allowance been proposed.

I understand that, overall, the population over the age of 65 is no longer growing. The principal demographic change is among the really elderly, and there is a substantial increase in the number of those aged 85 and above. The total number of subscribers to private health schemes has grown from 1 million in 1977 to 2·2 million in 1987, so the question arises whether the concession is necessary to encourage people to join private health schemes.

For that reason it is necessary to ask those who conduct the schemes what they believe is the position. I shall quote from an article by Barbara Miller that appeared in *The Guardian* on 12 October 1988, which was, of course, before the Health Service proposals were published. It said:

"BUPA, the largest British private health insurance company with 61·7 per cent. share of the market, does not want any major government intervention to help boost the private sector. 'We are not predicting, or expecting, any bouquets from the Prime Minister's review,' says Neil Jamieson of BUPA. 'We want to stand on our own feet and not be supported by measures taken by the Government . . . We feel very uncomfortable with many of the ideas that have been put forward . . . We do not believe they are in the broad interests of the British public'."

It is important to note that BUPA, the largest private health insurer, sees no need to give extra concessions or help to the private health sector.

5.30 pm

I accept entirely, as my right hon. Friend said, that those who do not pay taxation will, nevertheless, gain the advantage of a net reduction of the cost of medical insurance. However, does that total reduction overcome the amount required to compensate for the deadweight for existing subscribers? I do not know the calculations, but I believe that the cost of the concession will be some £40 million. I would guess that in the first year most of it will go to those who are already covered by existing schemes. If, however, the scheme becomes more popular, as the Government hope, it will cost much more than £40 million. Then, following the analogy of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, we must ask whether that is the best way to use the tax that a nurse pays.

I believe that the top rate of tax of 40 per cent. is a significant achievement and is a credit to my right hon. Friends. However, it necessarily means that those people who now pay a top rate of 40 per cent. are not on the bread line. The whole emphasis of our reforms is that we should stand on our own feet, yet the clause proposes that those already on private health schemes should be helped a little more. Of course, the point could be made that medical treatment is much more expensive for the elderly, but that is a problem that we all face. When the top rate of tax is only 40 per cent., it appears unnecessary to give extra assistance to people joining private health schemes.

Private health schemes are already making considerable progress. I have already mentioned the increased number of people covered by them. I understand that some company schemes already look after their pensioners and that more are proposing to do so, as I believe any good company scheme would aim to do. I wonder why it is necessary to have such an additional incentive when there is a natural trend towards the growth of private health insurance schemes and of company schemes assuming a responsibility for their pensioners.

I would be more prepared to accept the clause if it gave tax relief only to the elderly. Has my right hon. Friend not noticed how many elderly people now retiring have pretty good occupational pension schemes and are very well covered? Of course, by the time they retire, they have probably paid off their mortgage and they could, perhaps, do with a tax concession for their extra needs as elderly people. I can see some force in that argument. However, I cannot see any force in the argument that their children, who may be high salary earners and paying tax at only 40 per cent, should be given maximum tax relief on something that they could well afford to pay for their parents in any event. We must think carefully before we say that it is necessary to give to such a large extent a partial relief for private health schemes to those who could well afford to and jolly well should look after their parents.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman press the Financial Secretary about the deadweight of those already in schemes, who, on the implementation of the Finance Bill, will be beneficiaries? Will the hon. Gentleman press the Financial Secretary to give the proportion of the relief and the projected relief that will be given to such people?

Sir Peter Hordern: I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will wish to deal with that point, because I have already raised it with him, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

I understand that the Government have claimed that the relief would help to ease the problems in the National Health Service. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary made the point on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill that there would be savings—to some extent to a geared degree—because a small relief would allow significantly less expenditure to be made in the National Health Service. I accept my right hon. Friend's point and

the spirit in which he made it. However, if that is correct, we should be thinking of carrying that principle a little further, not just by means of a tax concession, but, if it is as good as that, we should be paying people the marginal rate to opt out of the Health Service. I do not believe that that is a good idea and nor is it a good argument.

If we are concerned about finding the best way to help the National Health Service, I suggest to my right hon. Friend that we ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I have noticed that my right hon and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health must come to the House every year—sometimes in the face of great difficulties, which are sometimes caused by my right hon. and hon. Friends—to justify increases in health charges. I have always supported my right hon. and learned Friend when he comes to the House because the poorest are exempt from those charges. The aim of the charges is to raise some direct payment from those who can afford to pay. However, the essence of this relief is that, while there should be some small relief for those who do not pay tax, the largest element of relief will go to those on very high earnings. Therefore, we have a complete contrast between the position of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health when he comes to the House concerning health charges and that of the proposal in the clause, which will give substantial relief to those who can well afford to make the arrangements in any event.

If the aim of the clause is to ease the burden on the National Health Service, it would be best left to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to decide how the money might be used. We must also bear in mind that tax concessions make people think that there is some virtue in opting out of the National Health Service, which is a view I do not share. If we persist in that view, it is the surest way to cause people to regard the Health Service as some form of second-rate service. I do not believe that that is wise or accurate.

If it is right to have tax concessions for health, there is a short distance to go before we shall be asked for tax concessions for education in the form, for example, of private education vouchers. That is something with which I would not agree. Unfortunately, we have got ourselves on a slippery slope and I for one am not prepared to go down it.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made some valid points in his contribution to this important debate. Although I do not intend to follow his line, he pursued well thought-out and important principles. At the end of his speech he said that he feared that the moves in the Finance Bill, and especially in clause 51, could set a dangerous precedent. I know that when the Minister speaks later in the debate he will deny that and say that the Government have no intention of moving in that direction in regard to health, education or similar areas. However, many people know that once the Government have started to move in a certain direction, subsequent years see further moves. Therefore, it is absolutely right that we should be concerned and somewhat fearful about the direction in which the Government intend to go.

I support amendment No. 5, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), which delays the implementation of the provisions of this clause until 1993. The clear intention is that the provisions will be the subject of debate in a general election and that after being elected the Labour Government will say that we do not believe that that is the direction that we should take.

In the first part of my speech I shall say why I disagree with the principles of the clause and I shall then turn my attention to the ways in which the money that we are discussing could be more widely used by the Government in the intervening three years from 1990 to 1993.

The Minister referred to £40 million, but he cannot be absolutely certain about the figure. Although I understand the reasons why he canot be certain, that makes this provision even more of an open cheque or an open encouragement. Some sons and daughters will, of course, take out health insurance for their elderly parents or for other people in their family, but not knowing exactly what figure we are talking about is dangerous.

If this proposal goes through and the Government do not heed the warnings, I accept that the right principle on which the provision should be carried out is on a MIRAS-type basis, which would benefit those pensioners who do not pay tax. However, I remind the Chief Secretary that the MIRAS principle was an extension of the option mortgage scheme that was originally introduced by the 1964-66 Labour Government to extend the tax concession that was then not available to people not paying tax to those at the lower end of the income scale. That welcome move ultimately developed into the MIRAS scheme as it now exists. If the provisions have to go through, such an underlying principle would be absolutely essential.

The clause would give assistance to those people who least need it. Ultimately, it is the pensioners or the relatives of the pensioners with the highest incomes, especially those paying tax at the highest rate, who will get the biggest benefit from this proposal. I am always amazed that the Government continually give any money or cash that is available to those who least need it and to the people who have most to start with. As evidence of that one need only look back to 1979, to the Government's first Finance Bill after the general election, when they reduced the standard rate of tax by only a small amount, but in effect gave a substantial amount to the people paying the higher rates of taxation. That trend has been evident in every Budget since.

Upratings of pensions now take place in April—at almost exactly the same time as the Government produce their Budget. As that is so close to the Budget, people on benefit and at the poorest end of the income scale are justified in relating what is being given in the Budget to those who least need help to what they are receiving in their benefit increases.

5.45 pm

If the Minister really wanted to introduce a provision to help the elderly, instead of going ahead with this proposal, which is of benefit to some but not to those who most need it, it would be far better to give something to those 200,000 pensioners who received no increase in the April uprating and to the 300,000 who received only a partial increase. Some of the pensioners at the bottom of the scale will not receive any increase in their pension in next year's uprating. The Chief Secretary fully understands the reason for that. The pensioners who were on supplementary benefit before the major changes in the social security system in April 1988 then went on to income support and were not entitled to as much in income support as they had

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

received under supplementary benefit because the new system is far meaner and far tighter. Many people lost a lot and, although certain people were given protected payments, those protected payments were to be eroded against any future increase. Therefore, next April for another year in succession, some people will not receive any increase in the amount of money that they receive from the state in their benefit payments. They will realise that at the same time the Government are giving at least £40 million in possible tax concessions to those people who are able to take out private health insurance. I am sure that people on benefit will feel that that is not right.

I do not intend to go too far along this line because on Thursday of this week we shall be having a major debate on the National Health Service review. I am sure that many, if not most, of our pensioners would prefer to see the Government move in a much more positive direction over the National Health Service instead of adopting the nonsensical and destructive approach of the review of which many people are rightly fearful. I know that hon. Members of all parties have been inundated with mail on this subject, especially from elderly people who fear an erosion of the Health Service.

One thing about which such people will be most fearful is that provisions to encourage private health treatment represent a split and a division in the Health Service and give a better opportunity for treatment to those who are able to pay. The hon. Member for Horsham said that he did not believe that the Health Service was second-rate. I know that he fully believes that and that he will be one of those who will fight to ensure that the National Health Service always maintains its status in terms of the type of treatment that it can give.

However, we must recognise that, whatever the clause provides in the future, the majority of elderly people will still depend on the National Health Service for their treatment and they are rightly concerned about what is happening. To some degree, this proposal, running along-side the National Health Service review as it does, proves our point that the Government are determined to break up and to destroy the principles of a National Health Service that is based on need and not the ability to pay. That is worrying.

The district health authority in my area is proposing to close yet another hospital. It will be the third in the past three years. Hartley hospital and Victoria hospital have already been closed and the district health authority is now proposing to close Bank Hall hospital for the care of the elderly. Although the health authority has not published its consultation document, admissions have already been stopped. That means that by the time the consultation exercise, which must be carried out, is completed, we will be faced with a fait accompli. Yet even now we have insufficient accommodation for elderly people in the National Health Service within our district. We know the detail of the consultation and we know that it will show that in future there will be less provision for the elderly and for those who need to remain in hospital care. The proposal will not help.

I have raised the following matter in Health Service debates and it ties in with the question of taxation. I wonder why people who pay for private treatment, who are not necessarily covered by insurance, often have to pay in cash. It is extremely common in my constituency for patients to be asked to pay cash. That is not because the people running the private hospitals think that the chance of the patient's recovery is not good and that, therefore, they will not otherwise receive the money. The reason is that the full amount paid is not shown and, therefore, tax is not paid on it. The Minister might well look at that issue rather than pursue the policies outlined in clause 51.

One of my constituents recently paid £1,000 cash for a cataract operation. He went against his principles but his wife was elderly and he was more worried about her and, in the end, he paid cash. He was asked to go to the hospital with not a cheque or banker's draft but cash.

The proposal is wrong. It will help only those who, in the main, can secure private treatment. If people have the money and the choice is there, it is their right to exercise that choice. However, it is not for the Government to give a tax concession to encourage more and more people to do so. They should put that money into the Health Service and tell the Secretary of State for Health that money is available to be spent in that way.

If the Government are successful in carrying the clause, they will give away at least £40 million. If they are prepared to do that, I can make some useful suggestions as to how they could put the money to better use. They could put it into the Health Service, which is important. The problem in the Health Service is not how it is run but the lack of resources, which could be made available. If the water industry were to remain in the public sector, the problem would be not who owned it, but the lack of money made available by a Government who have the resources to invest in it. They cannot keep talking about what happened pre-1979 because they have been in office for 10 years and must accept responsibility for what has happened.

My own authority receives less money for housing from the Government than it did prior to 1979. Therefore, the improvements to old council houses have slowed down and, despite the community refurbishment schemes and the extra little schemes of which the Government are so fond, the authority still receives considerably less money from the Government. One programme that we designed to improve the pre-war council houses should be coming to completion now, but it will have to run for at least another 10 years because the resources are not available.

The Opposition tend to get abused by people who say that our main concern is public sector housing. That is not true. We are just as concerned about problems in the private sector. There as a bonanza of grants up to 1983 but, having won the election in October, the Government announced a cutback. Money could be made available for grants and the improvement of older housing in certain parts of the country. When people apply for repair and improvement grants, they never obtain them because the councils never receive the cash from the Government. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) has experienced the same difficulty with older terraced houses on her side of the Pennines. Such houses could be improved because they are basically good houses, yet councils are unable to provide the money for doing so.

My own local authority has had to target just three areas—Leyland road, Hart street and Eliza street—because it could not deal with the borough as a whole. It had to stop repair and improvement grant applications in March 1984. Therefore, it will never be able to meet the demands of a mass of people who are in the pipeline. The

Government have thrown an extra £200,000 into private sector area renewal schemes, but that is chickenfeed. If the amendment were to succeed, part of the £40 million could go towards housing problems. The HIP allocation in Burnley was £2,250,000 for 1989-90 and it has received a few additional payments on top of that, but the projected programme needed an expenditure of £11,075,000 to deal with the problems.

Lancashire county council faces a problem with schools. We have chased the Government year after year. They could give a bigger allocation for schools in 1990 because they are prepared to give this tax concession from April next year. Instead of giving that tax concession, they could give the money to local authorities to spend on schools. I have had to battle for several years for schools to be included in the programme because the council has received only a fraction of money that it has sought from the Government to bring the schools up to standard. The standard of school building affects the education of the children.

Even though some schools are now included in the programme, problems still exist at Walshaw high school, Briercliffe primary school, Casterton Avenue primary school, Rosehill infants school, Gawthorpe high school, which needs an additional science laboratory, and Barden high school, which needs a home economics unit. It would be far better for the Government to spend money on those schools than to assist pensioners who do not really need help and who should be able to receive the treatment that they need. We want them to have the finest treatment from the NHS because they are entitled to that.

We are still awaiting the Government's response on the important issue of community care——

The Temporary Chairman: Order. What the hon. Gentleman says is immensely interesting, but it is important that he confines his remarks to the amendment that we are debating.

Mr. Pike: I was explaining how the Government could use the £40 million if they were prepared to accept the amendment. I am always helpful to the Government and would not wish them to be embarrassed if the amendment were carried tonight and they did not know what to do with the £40 million next year. I have been extremely helpful to them in that respect. However, I recognise and understand the constraints upon us. I could have made the same argument about the roads in Lancashire.

I shall return to the principle involved in the clause, which is leading us in the wrong direction. We want our elderly people to receive care under the National Health Service. We therefore believe that the Government should not give tax incentives to take people out of the NHS. They want to do that only because they are determined to cut the NHS and want to put a foot in the door and drag it down. That is the basic and fundamental reason why this proposal is contained within the Finance Bill.

Clause 51 is not designed to help the pensioners, although a few will benefit. It is designed to make another chip in the Health Service because the Government recognise that the one last remnant that shows that Socialism can work in this country that they have failed to destroy is the National Health Service. I hope that when it comes to the vote, hon. Members will recognise that the clause is nonsensical and that the amendment should be carried. The clause should be deferred for three years.

If the Government believe that they are right, let them test their opinion at the next general election. Let the people decide. The proposal was not in the Government's manifesto. If they receive a mandate at the next election —I am increasingly convinced that they will not—let them then implement the proposal. The Government should accept the amendment and put the idea to the people of the country.

6 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The matters before us are of considerable importance. I listened with great attention to the arguments of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), but I was conscious of growing surprise. He is an experienced Member and passes in some quarters as an expert in financial and fiscal matters. The drift of his argument seemed to be that there was complete equivalence between a Government allocation and a tax relief—between a Government decision to increase its Budget in favour of a particular purpose or actively and laying aside a sum that would be forgone in the form of a tax relief to benefit the same activity or purpose.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East appeared wholly ignorant of—or pretended to be ignorant of—one of the cardinal principles of fiscal policy: the gearing effect of tax relief. If the Government decide to increase the allocation to a particular activity by £1 million, the incremental resources directed to that activity are £1 million. If the Government decide to forgo £1 million in tax revenue by establishing a tax relief for that activity, and if the taxpayers who benefit from that relief pay tax at a marginal rate of, say, 40 per cent., the incremental resources that will flow to that activity will be £2,500,000 —a substantial difference.

Dr. Moonie: The money will be paid to the insurance companies, not to the individuals. It has nothing to do with a tax allowance—although people will pay less out of their own pockets, so the hon. Gentleman's argument is spurious. Government money through the MIRAS scheme will be paid directly to insurance companies such as BUPA, not to the people concerned, so it does come out of taxation.

Mr. Davies: That makes no difference. The point is that a tax relief is established which creates an inducement for people to spend more money than they otherwise would on purchasing particular goods or services. The particular mechanism whereby they purchase, and the intermediaries who may be involved in the purchase, do not matter. They are entirely immaterial to the economic or fiscal arguments involved. So I must reject the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

I return to the important question whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East was as ignorant as he pretended to be of the cardinal principle of fiscal policy to which I have referred—the gearing effect of tax reliefs. We discovered the answer to that question during his speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) reminded the hon. Gentleman of this principle. Then the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East made another extraordinary statement. He said that in this case the administrative costs of BUPA or PPP or the Provident or other health insurers will more than take up the additional resources that the gearing effect will

[Mr. Davies]

generate. So the gearing effect will be discounted or compensated for or negated by the high level of administrative costs.

Again, I ask myself whether the hon. Gentleman really believed what he was saying, and whether he expected the rest of the Committee to believe it. Does he really believe that the administrative costs of BUPA and PPP are 40 per cent. of their turnover? We had an interesting opportunity to discover the answer later in the hon. Gentleman's speech, when he mentioned the administrative costs that these health insurers generate—10 per cent. So the hon. Gentleman did not believe a word of his own argument.

I greatly resent and regret what the hon. Gentleman offered us today; it was an exercise in deliberately cynical disingenuousness and predetermined humbug.

The story does no stop there. The contradictions in the hon. Gentleman's speech went on and on. I am not in a position to say with certainty whether they were deliberately disingenuous or involuntary. Being an easygoing sort of person, well prepared to give colleagues the benefit of the doubt, I am perfectly prepared to believe that these other contradictions, unlike the one to which I have referred, were merely the reflection of weakness of reasoning or confusion of mind——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose——*

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East) *rose——*

Mr. Davies: Perhaps it might be useful to consider one or two of the other glaring contradictions in the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He complained at one point that the tax offset that the Government propose in clause 51 was not capped. A few moments later he complained that this tax relief would generate no material savings for the NHS. He cannot possibly have it both ways. By definition, to the extent to which the utilisation of this tax relief is capped, the benefits and savings to the NHS will be reduced.

The hon. Gentleman complained vigorously about the deadweight. If this tax relief were not used to any great extent by new people subscribing to private health insurance, the deadweight cost would remain a relatively high, possibly a very high, proportion of the total cost of the relief that the Government are proposing. However, to the extent that the take-up is greater, the deadweight costs will fall as a proportion until they may become minimal, negligible or altogether non-existent. So the argument is untenable.

I am flabbergasted that an experienced Member such as the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East should attempt to argue in the course of the same speech that a relief should be capped and then complain about the deadweight cost.

The hon. Gentleman has done a great disservice to the Committee, and I am sorry that such an unfortunate example of a parliamentary speech should have begun the Labour party's contribution to its proceedings. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think long and hard about his speech this afternoon and decide in the interests of the dignity and credibility of his party—if in no higher interests—that he will at least display slightly more respect for his audience inside the House and beyond it as the deliberations of the Committee continue. If he feels in need of it, he should without delay arrange to take a crash course in elementary logic.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I need not comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) because, frankly, most of my hon. Friends—and I suspect many of his hon. Friends—found it incomprehensible.

Amendment No. 5, which we are discussing, is linked with No. 8, which I tabled. Mine is a technical amendment on which I will not dwell. However, I must, for the record, point out that it should read:

"Clause 51, page 39, line 45, leave out from 'claim' to 'deducted' in line 46 and insert 'set off against its profits liable to tax on the amount'"

rather than just "tax the amount". It was obviously a printer's error.

My hon. Friends and I, and some Conservative Members, oppose the clause for two reasons. First, we do not accept that this is the best way to spend £40 million, or whatever the sum might be. We appreciate that it is a figure that the Treasury or Inland Revenue has plucked out of the air. It is difficult to estimate sums of this kind because the ultimate figure will depend on the demand and what happens after 1990. Indeed, it could end up being £200 million. As the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) said, if £40 million is available, it had better come out of the DHSS rather than out of the Inland Revenue and the Treasury for the NHS.

On Saturday I was in my local advice centre, as many other hon. Members must have been in theirs. I discovered that the waiting time to see a consultant dermatologist in the Llanelli area is two years from the time of referral by a local GP. That is due to the shortage of appointments of consultants in dermatology, which is to some extent a Cinderella service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said that £40 million would pay for 1,000 consultants. In my constituency I need just one extra consultant in dermatology. That would be of far more benefit to the NHS in my constituency than the amount of money that will come back to those of my constituents who can afford to take up this so-called tax relief.

My constituents must wait three years for a hip replacement operation. In other words, in my constituency I need two more orthopaedic surgeons. That would be of more benefit to the NHS and the elderly in my area than what is proposed in the clause.

We know why the Government are taking this action. The Prime Minister wants a two-tier health service. She does not believe in the NHS. She could not get her way entirely with the changes that she wanted to make, so she rushed off to the tax system. I admit that Governments of both parties have sometimes rushed to the tax system when they have been unable to solve their problems and get their way by some other means.

The second reason why Labour Members, and some Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Horsham, oppose the clause is that we believe that the tax system should not be used for what was once described as social engineering. We used to hear speeches from Conservative Members—not from the present Chief Secretary; he was not around in those days—including the present Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Financial Secretary, about the evils of social engineering. Of course, they were in opposition at the time. Certainly

Governments are not supposed to use the tax system to advance a philosophy or ideology. The tax system is supposed to be neutral and to raise money for the Government. Governments must achieve their aims by other means—by changing structures rather than by using the tax system.

Conservative Administrations have been involved in more social engineering than have most Labour Governments since the war. I well remember the enterprise zone concept introduced by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, now the Foreign Secretary. That was a bit of social engineering, and it has not worked. The Chancellor needs to encourage savings, and social engineering includes, for example, PEP schemes and unit trusts and the tax reliefs that are given to people to invest in schemes of that kind.

There are many other examples of social engineering. We are debating one such piece of social engineering now; the Government are trying to achieve something in which they believe ideologically and they are trying to achieve it through the tax system.

6.15 pm

What the Government propose is all dressed up as a contract of insurance, but as I read the legislation, if an elderly person wishes to have one operation—my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) referred to a cataract operation—presumably it will be necessary for that person simply to take a sum of money to an insurance company, buy what is called a premium and then get the operation that is required.

That is a veneer. The Government are giving tax relief to buy services with money, although they are talking about health or medical insurance. It seems that it will be possible to make one payment, for one premium, and exchange that for a contract, and presumably after the one operation has been achieved, that will be the end of that piece of medical insurance. That is my understanding of how it will work. That is buying services and getting tax relief for the purchase. That is the wrong way to use the tax system. It is also dangerous because it could lead to all manner of other pieces of social engineering.

The hon. Member for Horsham made the fair point that, with a top tax rate of 40 per cent. and a basic rate of 25 per cent., there is no justification for tax breaks or tax reliefs. The Government take much of their radical Right philosophy from the United States, from the Reagan followers. In fairness to President Reagan, he took a Bill through Congress under which he reduced the top rates of tax and wiped out most of the tax breaks and tax allowances.

The Prime Minister likes to follow the American system, but she cannot bring herself not to use the tax system for ideological purposes. The logic of her philosophy would have been not to have tax reliefs. Then the Government could have reduced the top tax rates to 40 per cent. That would have made sense. Mortgage interest relief is another example of that. To try to have it both ways—a lower rate of tax plus the reliefs that they propose, which go to those who pay at the top rates—represents an unfair, unjust and unnecessary use of the tax system.

In connection with the somewhat esoteric amendment that I tabled, which has not been selected, I understand that most organisations such as BUPA and PPP are taxed as provident associations. I gather that they are not charities. I do not know whether they pay tax, and perhaps the Minister will say if they do. I appreciate that he is not permitted to go to the Inland Revenue and examine people's tax affairs, but presumably organisations such as BUPA publish accounts.

My amendment was designed to ask whether, if such organisations do not pay tax, they can still claim back the tax which has been deducted in the MIRAS scheme. Presumably they can. That is unusual, since if they have no profits on which they pay tax, they are like charities; they simply claim a subsidy from the Treasury. So it is nothing but a subsidy.

My understanding of the tax system is that normally the Revenue pays tax back—if, of course, one is paying tax on one's profits. But if one is not paying tax on one's profits, there is no real case in tax logic to reclaim the tax. If I am right, then this is a clear and straight subsidy, and there is no justification for it.

The clause goes on to deal with qualifying individuals and insurance companies. My reading of the provision leads me to believe that a company doing business in the EEC would be a qualifying insurer for this purpose. The company does not even have to be resident in the United Kingdom, or even to trade here. Does that mean that, if an elderly person takes out a contract of insurance with a German medical insurance company, the Inland Revenue will send a chunk of money to Germany? Presumably the same would apply to a company in France or in any other EEC country.

May we be told whether that is the case and, if so, why it is necessary? It appears to have been necessary to include a provision to apply the provision not only to insurers in Britain but to insurers in the EEC as well. I would not have thought that there was a Community directive to that effect. Do I gather from the look of amusement on the Minister's face that there is such a directive? Are the hands of the Government tied in the matter? In other words, we are not talking about £40 million going to the British health system, as Ministers like to call it; it seems that much of it will go across the exchanges to other countries.

It is extraordinary that a business operating in Europe, paying no tax in Britain, should receive a tax subvention from the Inland Revenue. I take it that that is what will happen from the way in which the Financial Secretary was half-smiling in anticipation of that question.

Clause 51 is unnecessary. It will hinder, not help, the NHS. A little of the £40 million that is available could be spent on providing more consultants. That would not be inflationary. It would not hurt the balance of payments more than it is hurt already. It would not lead to a surge of imports. As the hon. Member for Horsham said, that money should be spent on the NHS through the DSS, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Office, so that once again we can make our Health Service the best in the world.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Tax breaks are always hard to justify. It is difficult to introduce more tax concessions into our tax system and to maintain the essential elements of a fair, just and equitable taxation system. However, the introduction of tax relief on medical insurance is a small change. It can be justified because it removes an injustice presently experienced by those who, on retirement, find themselves cast out of insurance schemes because they can no longer afford them. This is a minor measure, but it rights a wrong. Like other tax concesssions, it brings greater justice into our fiscal system.

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

As private medical insurance expands, more and more people receive the benefit of such insurance from their companies. Often, they are not highly paid and so will not benefit from a large pension. When such people leave their employment they find that the benefits that went with it cease. Those who once enjoyed the benefits of private medical insurance will find those benefits withdrawn.

Ms. Abbott: The hon. Gentleman talks about private health insurance being withdrawn from the over-60s as though that were an act of God. Is it not the case that private insurers withdraw such insurance from elderly people because there are no profits to be made from it? If the hon. Gentleman is worried about justice, he should be writing to those private insurers. Is it not the nature of a system run for profit that the elderly will not be covered?

Mr. Carrington: The elderly frequently are covered. That is exactly the point.

Ms. Abbott: One per cent.

Mr. Carrington: Private insurance companies will frequently continue cover provided payments are made by the person insured. As long as the cover is continuous, elderly people find it perfectly possible to obtain cover and are encouraged to do so by many private insurance companies. The problem comes when there is a break in that cover because, at the point of retirement, they can no longer afford to pay the premium. That is the problem that clause 51 is trying to address.

Another good justification for giving such a tax concession is that it seeks to ensure that private medical insurers can afford to address the problem of the elderly. They do that by building up the number of elderly people with medical insurance to a point at which it becomes self-sustaining because the number of people benefiting from it justifies the effort being made by the insurance companies to provide cover.

Clause 51 is justifiable and highly beneficial. The amount of money involved is small; £40 million is about one tenth of 1 per cent. of the annual expenditure on the Health Service and is only a small proportion of Britain's annual health budget. Consequently, the cost to the Exchequer is small compared with the total amount paid out by taxpayers in providing medical cover for the nation.

An additional benefit is that this measure will encourage the growth of private medical care. People will realise that by joining such schemes or by encouraging their employers to join such schemes, they will be able to obtain cover throughout their lives and not simply up to retirement. As more people are encouraged to join such schemes so more employers will be encouraged to provide them.

The growth of private medical cover is beneficial to the whole of society, not just to those who obtain it. It is good for a number of reasons. To start with, it provides choice. People who wish to have such choice, or who work for employers who wish to provide them with that choice, will be able to say where they want to obtain their medical treatment. That introduces competition which benefits the NHS as well as the private sector.

Many changes in the NHS in the attitude towards patients and the way in which they benefit from hotel-type services—we see this particularly in London hospitals—are a reflection of the much higher quality of care provided by private hospitals. Our NHS hospitals have recognised that they must match that service in order to meet the requirements of the patients.

Mr. Turner: Will the hon. Gentleman answer one simple question? How would the hon. Gentleman's analysis about patient choice, freedom and opportunity affect a person knocked down in the road tonight or a person suffering from a more common ailment such as appendicitis? Would not such people simply ask to be taken to a hospital to have their needs attended to? Is not all this an aberration——

The Temporary Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is becoming a little lengthy.

Mr. Turner: I shall bring it to a conclusion, Mr. Hogg. Thank you for your forbearance.

Should we not be working to build a Health Service for all, irrespective of means, so that all have the choice of good medicine and service wherever they are?

Mr. Carrington: The competition created by the private medical sector has been important in changing what happens to such a person when he or she arrives at hospital. In the past, hospital waiting areas were dingy and over-crowded, not, to use the current jargon of the Health Service, user-friendly.

6.30 pm

What is now happening is that our major hospitals in London are changing the patient areas inside the hospitals to bring them more up to the standards regarded as usual in the private sector. That has been a reaction to the standards which have been shown to be perfectly possible and affordable within the private sector. It just took the extra effort and the private competition for the National Health Service to do the same. I believe that competition does nothing but good for the whole level of health care across the country and that the encouragement of that standard of health care is to everybody's advantage.

One point that is very important and seems to get lost quite frequently in the discussion of private medical insurance is that private medical insurance cannot, is not, and never will be in the foreseeable future a substitute for the National Health Service. It does not pretend to be and, particularly for the elderly, never could be. I am not advocating that it should be and this clause does not propose that it should be. What happens now with medical cover is that it takes out the smaller operations and minor, more routine treatments which otherwise would clog up the NHS. It does not attempt to cover long-term care and should not do so. It is an add-on to the NHS; it does not pretend to be a substitute for it.

Ms. Abbott: Is it not the case that in practice private medicine is a terrible drain on the Health Service? Is it not the case that the private sector trains no nurses and that every nurse who works in the private sector has cost our Health Service £10,000?

Mr. Carrington: Private medical care is often a great benefit to the National Health Service in making it possible for the NHS to go to private hospitals and relieve the load with which it would not otherwise be able to cope. That is extremely beneficial. For the elderly to be able to get the minor treatment they need and to pay for it themselves and not be a drain on the NHS is to everyone's benefit. It frees

up the care which the Health Service can then give to other elderly people who are not able to cover themselves with private insurance.

I believe that the only criticism which could be made of this clause and which in certain circumstances could be justified is that £40 million will be taken away from the NHS and be used to subsidise the tax relief which this clause would create. The sum of £40 million is very small in terms of the total NHS budget. I do not believe that it is measurable in the amounts which the Government are increasingly giving to the NHS. The Government are increasing the sums given to the NHS by very large amounts. Indeed, there is every evidence to show that this £40 million is in addition to Health Service resources rather than a substitution or a change in the resources from one point in health care to another.

I therefore welcome the very beneficial effects which I believe this clause will have. It will be a major help to certain sectors of the elderly population. It will have a very limited detrimental effect on the overall tax position, which I believe is well justified by the major benefits to the health care of the elderly and of the country generally.

Dr. Moonie: I listened with great attention and interest to the speeches of the hon. Members for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) and for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) but had some difficulty in getting the gist of what they were trying to say. I can only conclude that we have here as accomplished a pair of bankers as we have ever had in the House. My granny, Mr. Hogg, as you will well appreciate, being from a similar part of the world, used to have a pair of wally dugs on her mantelpiece. I have heard more sense talked by the dugs than I have heard from that pair this afternoon.

The Chief Secretary, in reply to a remark by me from a sendentary position on the subject of the dock labour scheme, was somewhat dismissive of the analogy which I raised. I put it to the Committee, however, that it is appropriate because, while he was engaged in telling us with hand on heart that his party had no intention whatsoever of extending this tax relief, I attempted to draw his attention to the fact that two weeks before the Dock Work Bill, abolition of, was introduced, his hon. Friends were similarly standing with hand on heart saying that they had no intention of bringing that in either. I merely use that to show just how much faith we can put in the Minister's word on this occasion.

I hope this evening to show that this proposal is utterly irrelevant to the health needs of the British people. The National Association of Health Authorities yesterday identified a cumulative underfunding of the NHS totalling £3 billion. We should remember that that association is not exactly stuffed with socialists, if the representatives that I have met are anything to go by. So, at a time when the Health Service is underfunded by £3 billion—and this is said by the Government's friends, not its enemies—the Government have shown us where their real priorities lie by promoting private medicine, not to supplement the NHS—I will come to some detailed arguments on that in a moment—not to ease its burden, but to begin a dubious crusade to change its nature and force more and more people to go to the private sector for a larger percentage of their health care and to leave the NHS to function, as they would like it to, as a safety net for those who cannot afford the insurance premiums for private care, those who in the main are old. I can assure hon. Members that there will not be too many pensioners in my constituency rushing to take advantage of the tax relief on health insurance premiums after this scheme is brought in, assuming, of course, that I fail to persuade enough hon. Gentlemen to change their minds on the matter.

Those who are old, those who suffer from chronic illness and those who are locked in poverty are the ones who will be left, under the Government's ultimate ideas, to be dealt with by the NHS. There will be those with mental illness or mental handicap—groups which are not covered by private medical insurance, those who have been so shabbily treated over the past 10 years and, I accept, before that—those for whom our Health Service remains a national scandal and an international disgrace.

On the surface, as the Minister said, this is a small fiscal measure, costing, by the Government's admittedly curious accounting system, a mere £40 million in its first full year. It is a modest measure, we are asked to believe by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, aimed at answering the pitiful cries for assistance that have come to his ears from those who have had their cover paid for them by their employers over the past few years and who will lose it when they become pensioners.

On the contrary, this is not a minor change: it is a significant precedent that is being set by the Treasury, which has been forced into an ideological dilemma by the Prime Minister, who has decided for her own reasons to listen to the voice of self-interest, of special pleading, rather than that of reason. This, make no mistake, is merely the first step in the process. It will not be long before we are told that it is essential to extend it to other age groups and then to other areas of the economy, as the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has mentioned in the past; to the area, possibly, of education. Before long, by the same logic, they may find the company car just as essential to an elderly person. Mobility is a tremendous component of health, as anybody involved in preventive medicine must know. It is just as logical to extend tax relief to the company car for the person who leaves employment as to extend it to medical care.

Ms. Abbott: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman. I understand that there has just been a High Court ruling that the Government's leaflet on the poll tax is illegal. Would that be of relevance to this debate?

The Temporary Chairman: I doubt whether the hon. Lady could find a way of bringing that in order, although as this afternoon has progressed it seems to me that many things have been in order that might otherwise have been out of order.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Hogg. Would it be inappropriate at this point to suggest that perhaps the Minister responsible should come to the House and make a statement, because clearly it is a matter of great national importance and the world outside will be very keen to hear how the Government will explain this to the country?

The Temporary Chairman: Whether or not the Minister comes to the Dispatch Box to make a statement is not a matter for me or for the Committee.

Dr. Moonie: I am sure you will agree, Mr. Hogg, that that intervention was most interesting, and I see great consternation on the faces of Conservative Members.

[Dr. Moonie]

Philosophically, I am implacably opposed to private medical care, but I would not deny another person's right to make his own decision as to whether it is right or wrong.

I oppose the scheme on sound economic grounds as well. Public health care cannot be matched in the private sector at the same price. It is an asset that is the envy of every other civilised nation. It is effective and economical, and is equitable in its treatment of people. It requires only an adequate level of resources, but that has been repeatedly denied to it by the Government, despite the Government's protestations and cook-book figures. Those resources have been denied at a time when the Treasury's coffers are bursting with money that could be spent to alleviate some of the country's relatively minor problems.

There are many good reasons why right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee should oppose the scheme. I disagree strongly with tax allowances or perks. I believe that the tax system should be essentially neutral, and Treasury Ministers probably do as well. However, in the case of mortgage tax relief, right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee acknowledge that it involves a degree of political expediency as well as moral rectitude in ensuring that people are treated equitably. It is perhaps not as easy to do away with some longstanding privileges as it is with others. In the past, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made statements broadly supporting the view that the tax system should be neutral, and they had my support. In any event, I see no reason for introducing a new form of tax saving that will be paid for out of the public purse.

The new scheme must be regarded as a retrograde step. If the Chancellor stays in his job long enough, he too will come to regret it. The deadweight cost alone will be far higher than the Treasury's forecast. Money paid by other people into the Consolidated Fund will be used directly to subsidise the cost of providing a minority with private medical insurance. That subsidy will benefit people who cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be deemed to be in need of such care.

The scheme is also inequitable. It benefits a minority —not just pensioners, but whoever pays the premium. That can be any relative or friend who can prove that they have stumped up the money. That is unfair in the extreme. The vast majority of pensioners cannot afford private health care, though many of them pay taxes and will be subsidising those who will be enjoying the scheme's benefits. Very few pensioners in my own constituency are likely to enjoy any benefit.

One point that has escaped the attention of most people who, unlike myself, do not have the good fortune to work in health care is that the subsidy will be paid to people who are healthy. Private medical insurance by definition—particularly in respect of the elderly—is not held by those who are sick. If one is sick, one is excluded from joining such schemes. As one of the benefits of private health care is that there is no waiting time, one can assume that the deadweight cost will be borne entirely by people who are either healthy or whose past ailments have already been treated, with very few exceptions. I do not see why a health care benefit should be paid to people who are healthy. Money should on the contrary be spent on those requiring health services and whose medical needs have already been identified.

6.45 pm

I do not believe either that the scheme makes good business sense. The subsidy will go straight into the companies' profits. As was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the money will not be passed on for health care. More importantly, private sector costs are rapidly escalating as the companies involved attempt to maintain their margins. Such schemes are largely concentrated in London and the south-east, so it is hardly surprising that their costs are rising at the rate that they are. The subsidy will serve to distort the health care market and accelerate the rising premium levels—in much the same way that mortgage tax relief helped to increase house prices over the past decade.

I also oppose the measure on the ground of efficiency. It is targeted at the healthy and at the better off, and is generally wasteful. The same amount of money spent within the National Health Service would bring three times as much benefit. That has been clearly shown in my own constituency. Under a Government's initiative, money was allocated to reduce waiting lists. The health board, quite rightly, tested the market and investigated what the private sector could offer, but it discovered that by rearranging its own wards and theatres three times as many operations could be undertaken there than in a comparable private hospital. That analogy holds good in any other part of the country.

The proposal is senseless. I do not know whether it was dreamt up by the Prime Minister or by some idiot savant in one of her so-called think tanks. Like the rest of the Government's health care proposals, the scheme is born out of expediency and self-interest, and it is not based on any proper analysis of health needs. Therefore, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee will reject it when the Opposition amendment is voted on later tonight.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Although I disagree with much of what has been said from the Opposition Benches this afternoon, I must tell my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that I have reservations about the scheme, but largely for tax reasons. Before explaining them, I shall touch on one or two details of the proposed relief. I refer first to a sentence in an Inland Revenue press release stating:

> "Contracts paying a de minimis, sum of up to £5 a night for small out-of-pocket expenses—for example to cover newspapers and flowers—will, however, qualify."

A cash payment of £35 per week cannot in my view be justified. I know that it is de minimis, but when people enter either a National Health Service or private hospital they make savings in their outgoings. To allow them £5 cash per night out of their policy is wrong.

My second point has been touched on by one or two other hon. Members—that there is no cap on the relief. The table of costs of direct tax allowances and reliefs in the public expenditure White Paper reveals the £30,000 limit on mortgage tax relief, which we all know about, as well as the £4,800 limit on personal equity plans. There is also a £40,000 limit on the business expansion scheme. However, the private medical care scheme imposes no upper limit on the amount of premium qualifying for relief. Although the contract must fulfil certain conditions, there is no upper limit to the premium it involves, and perhaps there ought to be.

I am concerned also about the deadweight cost. The Red Book states that the cost for 1990-91 of £40 million

assumes an increase in take-up as a result of the new relief of 10 per cent. That means, of course, that 90 per cent. of the new relief will go to people already paying these premiums, and the whole of that cost, I am sure my hon. Friend will accept, is a deadweight cost. That is a worrying factor because it means that the number of people it is estimated will be able to benefit from the relief is 5 per cent. of the 12 million pensioners in this country, which is 600,000 people. Of those 600,000 people, just 10 per cent., or 60,000, will be taking up this benefit because of the tax relief available. That is exactly half a per cent. of all pensioners.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The hon. Gentleman is making a series of very important points and he has indicated the people who may well benefit from this medical tax relief. Am I right in suspecting that the Prime Minister could be one of those people?

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister has been mentioned in the course of this debate, but I am not in a position to comment on that.

The next thing I am concerned about is the fact that the Treasury has decided that it is appropriate to give the tax relief not just at the standard rate but at the higher rate. There was misunderstanding earlier between my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) because two separate pieces of information were given which did not appear to be capable of reconciliation. I think they are. The first is that half of the £40 million will go to higher rate taxpayers. That is a matter of concern because it means that £20 million will go to higher rate taxpayers, so by definition £7·5 million will simply be relief at the higher rate, which is a disproportionately large amount. My right hon. Friend also said that 80 per cent. of the beneficiaries will be standard rate taxpayers. The reason for the apparent discrepancy between those two facts must be that a lot of the people who will pay the premiums are not retired people at all but the children of retired people, many of whom will be higher rate taxpayers.

When it comes to whether this relief is justified in terms of taxation policy, we have to look at what is right in principle and I think we should start with the general proposition that we should have, as far as possible, a tax-neutral system and as few tax reliefs as possible. Of course, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has done away with quite a few, for example, life assurance premium relief and minor personal reliefs, but we still have quite a large number of tax reliefs, which are listed in the public expenditure White Paper, and they can be justified on two grounds: first of all, on the grounds of encouraging savings and home ownership, and secondly, on the grounds of encouraging enterprise and trying to make the economy more efficient, for example, profit-related pay and the business expansion scheme.

However, this proposed relief does not fit into either of those categories and is difficult to justify in terms of the existing arrangements. The record of the Treasury has not been just to do away with some reliefs, but to cap some others. The £30,000 limit on mortgage interest relief has been with us for some time, so that the real value of it has fallen substantially in recent years, and in this Budget we have seen for the first time a cap on occupational pensions, such as the new qualifying limit for salaries, which will be £60,000. If one chooses to have a pension based on a higher salary than that, one will not get any tax relief.

I support that. It is right that there should be a cap on these tax reliefs, because they are all in effect public expenditure and have to be paid for by other taxpayers. That is why they are listed in a table in the public expenditure White Paper, which I have already referred to. However, this relief, like the mortgage interest relief at source relief, is public expenditure in another way in that it also goes to non-taxpayers. It is more than just a tax relief because it cannot be described in that way for non-taxpayers, who have no tax liability. It is a straight subsidy to them, and we should be clear that that is what it is.

Looking at the other arguments used to support this, my right hon. Friend argued that it is a difficult time for people when they retire, because, when in employment, the employer provides this benefit for them. They do not pay for it themselves; it is a benefit in kind, part of their remuneration package, and the company gets tax relief against corporation tax. On the other hand, of course, they get taxed on it themselves; they have to pay income tax on the benefit in kind if they are paid more than £8,500 a year, which of course a majority are. The argument goes on that when they retire they are suddenly faced with paying the premium themselves, when they have a lower income because they have gone to their retirement pension.

That rather misses the point of why we allow this as a tax deductible cost for employers in the first place. Why do employers pay these premiums? They do it for their own self-interest so that if a member of the work force becomes ill they want to minimise the time he is away from work, and one way of doing that is to pay private health premiums to ensure treatment is received as quickly as possible so that the employee can return to work. That is perfectly reasonable, but we should not kid ourselves about why they do it. Different considerations apply when someone retires, and it is very difficult to justify providing this relief, for the reasons I have already mentioned.

I am sorry to disagree with my right hon. Friend, who said at the end of his speech that it would provide old people with peace of mind. It will never do that because it cannot be comprehensive. It is impossible to insure against every possible contingency and liability which arise in old age. In particular, of course, a lot of old people need long-term care, which is where the high costs arise to the Health Service, and there is no way one can insure against the costs of long-term care. One can insure against short-term illness, which is fine as far as it goes, because it will relieve the Health Service. There is no doubt about that. I am very much in favour of encouraging people as far as possible to use private health care. In the Second Reading debate I said that I have never understood why the Opposition complain that the Prime Minister does not use the NHS, because everybody who does not use it relieves it and there are more resources available for others. I have no difficulty about that. The same is true of the education service.

What we are debating this evening is whether it is right to give those people who make that choice tax relief. I am in favour of freedom of choice, but should we give tax relief to encourage people to make this decision? On the basis of what I have heard, I do not think that the case has been proved.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I very much agree with the concluding sentiments of the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). Clearly the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) was not listening to him, because many of her colleagues concurred with him as well. We are not against choice in society; even the policy reviews of today are not against choice in society. We are against choice for the more privileged being tax-funded at the direct expense of the poorer in society. That is the nub of the offensiveness of these proposals, and the subsidy that the Government are giving. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was quite correct in what he said when he moved an earlier amendment. In his opening speech, the Chief Secretary seemed to express surprise at the depth of feeling this subject aroused, and he said that he could not understand why there was so much concern and controversy, because, after all, it affected only "a limited number of elderly people", so it should be particularly contentious.

We have heard that there is £40 million at stake—a significant sum of money. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), who seemed to feel that, because it was a minuscule part of the total NHS budget, we should become particularly exercised over it. There is a significant amount of money at stake, but there is also a principle at stake. That principle—this follows directly from what was said by the hon. Member for Beaconsfield—is that the tax system should not be used, wherever possible, to subsidise or enhance choice for the minority at the expense of the majority.

7 pm

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, as he was at the time, said in a BBC television interview for the programme "On the Record" that he was not considering such tax subsidies, because that was what the NHS was there for. Since the splitting of his Department into the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security, that Secretary of State has been confined largely to social security issues, while the new Secretary of State for Health has introduced a White Paper. I do not think that the proposal in the Budget can now be seen in isolation from other proposals in that White Paper.

While the Budget is willing to fly in the face of the Chancellor's previous statements and his track record on tax reform and tax balance, the White Paper is silent on the subject of resources. There is a striking contrast between the two Departments. One is bringing forward major structural proposals for National Health Service reform, yet has nothing to say about the resources needed to improve the quality of health care. The other—the Treasury—has produced a proposal that, by its own admission, will not put a penny into the National Health Service directly, but will merely provide a subsidy for those who wish to opt for treatment outside the National Health Service. That seems a most curious, convoluted and contradictory set of proposals. Choice is all very well, but that kind of subsidised choice strikes me as offensive when the National Health Service is not receiving the funding that it deserves.

It is pretty clear from the White Paper where the Government are going. They are making no secret of it: the Prime Minister has said many times in the past that she is in favour of a more American-style "go-getting" society. She does not appear to give even a passing thought to those who may have nowhere to go and nothing to get, and that is never more obvious than in health care policy. As a Labour Member has already pointed out, many patients are languishing on waiting lists for referrals to consultants. The proper standard of service is not being delivered. One hopes that adequate health care would be the priority of any Government, whatever their political complexion; sadly, it is not the priority of this Government.

It is clear that this type of subsidy will lead us further down the road to private health care. If people are fortunate enough to have a disposable income that allows them sufficient consumer choice to pay the insurance premiums for private health care if they so wish, good luck to them; I am not making an egalitarian point. How they spend their money is up to them. They should not, however, be able to indulge that choice, created by their security and affluence, at the direct expense of others who enjoy no such benefits and have not the opportunity to go one better at the taxpayers' expense. Sad to say, that fundamental principle is now lost on the Government.

Several points have been made about administration. I note that amendment No. 21 endeavours to limit relief to the basic level of income tax. Let me make it clear that I do not believe that such a concession should be introduced in the first place, but if we are to believe reports, the Treasury was never in favour of the subsidy and it appeared in the Budget only as a result of insistence from No. 10 Downing street. If it is to retain any self-respect, the Treasury should go for the option in the amendment rather than for the entirely offensive option of allowing relief at the higher rate of 40 per cent. Limiting it to the basic rate would by no means ameliorate the difficulty that the Government are creating but it would at least save the additional financial and administrative machinery that would be required to collect the top-rate contributions.

It seems bizarre, indeed perverse, that—judging by the figures that have been given in earlier speeches—undue additional resources will have to be devoted within the Treasury or Inland Revenue to top-rate taxpayers who are already receiving an enhancement to the buying power of their income that is well in excess of anything that they deserve. If the Government are so interested in prudence, efficiency and the correct use of public money and Civil Service time, I would expect them to find some attractions in amendment No. 21.

The Chief Secretary was at pains to stress the help that the measure would provide for the elderly, and how much it would assist social policy. That view does not seem to be shared by Age Concern or the Royal College of Nursing, both of which have extensive and professional experience. The RCN points to the glaring inequality of the Government's social policy:

> "Put simply, clauses 51-54 of the Finance Bill fail the test as a social policy, just as they are fatally flawed as a fiscal policy."

That, surely, must be the epitaph on the tombstone of this part of the Bill, and the Treasury, the Government and indeed the Conservative party should be ashamed of it.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): In preparation for this debate I have been reflecting on the way in which society has treated two people in their mid-seventies.

On Friday I was visited in my surgery by a man whom I guessed to be about that age. He complained that he had been to a doctor and had been diagnosed as having psoriasis, an unpleasant complaint. He had been

prescribed an ointment, which was gradually dealing with the psoriasis but was destroying his clothing: his underclothes and other clothes were marked in a way that made them unfit to wear. He asked what could be done. Could he obtain cash with which to replace the clothing that had been spoilt by the medical treatment that he had received?

I thought about it and said, "I cannot think of anything because under the Department of Social Security changes last year special payments have been withdrawn. You might get a loan from the social fund but probably you would not, because you are poor and it would be impossible for you to pay it back." The man needed probably £50 to £100 for basic requirements.

I contrast him with another person in his mid-70s, say, a Mr. Denis Thatcher. According to BUPA, the cost of comprehensive cover for a married couple, where the older of the couple is over 70, would be cut from £1,102 to £661. I assume that Mr. Denis Thatcher pays tax at the rate of 40p in the £. That may be a foolish assumption, because there are enough concessions nowadays for a skilled operator like Mr. Thatcher to make sure that he pays only at the 25 per cent. level. At the 40 per cent. level, that would be a direct gift——

Mr. Couchman: On a point of order, Sir Anthony. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to make disparaging comments about someone who has no possibility of answering the comments? I think that it is a most disgraceful slander.

The Temporary Chairman (Sir Anthony Meyer): It is a point for debate; it is not out of order.

Mr. Worthington: I would be delighted to give Mr. Thatcher the opportunity to reply and to debate the issue with me. It is a fair point to make that the Government are offering a choice about how to spend money. If someone in the position of Mr. Thatcher were to take out a BUPA comprehensive scheme, he would get a direct gift of £440.

It is a question of priorities. Have the Government got the priorities right? Will the people who will receive the gifts from the taxation system merit those gifts? Should they have priority? There has been reference in the debate to the fact that the Chancellor unfortunately has turned away from his attempt when he became Chancellor to turn taxation and the receipt of income into a level playing field, so that all kinds of income were treated fairly and equally. I would have supported him in that attempt, but that is not what we are getting now.

The proposal will lead to a direct gift from the rest of us to a group of people to enable them to take out private medical insurance after the age of 60. As has been said many times, there is an element of dishonesty about costing it at £40 million. That might be the cost in the first year, but it would be more honest to say that the total cost will be much greater. Many hon. Members have pointed out the sheer unfairness of the proposal. Someone on a higher rate of taxation could get the higher rate of tax relief on his income because he supported the health insurance of a relative or someone who was not even a relative——

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Is the hon. Gentleman trying to say that those who choose to take out health insurance are by definition rich and those who choose to use the National Health Service exclusively, without taking out health insurance, are by definition poor? Surely some very wealthy people choose not to take out health insurance, thus taking pressure off the Health Service, and some people with very little money choose to use their money for things such as private education or private health care because they believe that that is best for them and their family. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not making the mistake of assuming that all people in that category are rich.

7.15 pm

Mr. Worthington: That was a strange intervention, which would have been better made in a speech by the hon. Gentleman. There seems to be a shortage of speakers on the Government side. His intervention was not related to anything that I was saying. I invite the hon. Gentleman to make his own speech in his own time.

What is inadequate and wrong about the proposal is that we are subsidising through taxation the private health sector. We are subsidising a relatively inefficient system compared with the National Health Service. It does not matter which yardstick one takes when considering health care in this country or in the rest of the world; it costs more to provide services through the private sector than through the National Health Service.

Under the private system, human health care is moved into the world of garage and motor mechanics. What I mean by that is that if one is unfortunate enough to have an accident with the car, the immortal words spoken by the mechanic are, "Is it an insurance job?" If it is, that means that it will be bonanza day for the owner because of the treatment that his car will receive, and it will be bonanza day for the garage because of what it can charge. That is the experience with private health insurance as well. Wherever private health insurance has been introduced, up go the costs. One gets unnecessary medicine, which is administratively very expensive. That is what we are being asked to subsidise through the Government's proposal.

Going back to the idea of a level playing field, when rates of income tax were heavily progressive—I would argue, probably against my party, that they were too severely progressive and that it was counter-productive—there was a case for people seeking to receve part of their income in perks. It might be argued that, in the past, the British entrepreneur or executive was underpaid compared with his European equivalent. He may have been underpaid, but he was certainly over-perked. It is difficult to find any other European country where there are so many ways in which people can receive tax relief with the agreement of the Government.

I thought that the Government had recognised that tax perks were counter-productive and that all income should be treated equally. I was applauding the fact that the MIRAS scheme was being limited to £30,000 and was being phased out, although that was unspoken. One welcomes that and the fact that the tax perk of the company car is being made less valuable.

A great many other perks remain. I am grateful to the Monks Partnership Ltd. for its work on board and senior management remuneration which pointed out that, among senior managers, 84 per cent. get free medical insurance, virtually all are given life assurance policies, 53 per cent. have their home telephone costs fully or partly met by their companies and 54 per cent. receive free newspapers—that is the level it gets down to. According to *The Economist*, 30

[Mr. Worthington]

per cent. have their golf club fees paid. We should be getting away from that style of paying people. We should have fairness for everyone.

The extension of a tax break on health insurance premiums for people over 60 is a step in the wrong direction. However one looks at it, it is a non-selective benefit. The poll tax is a rigorous means test; housing benefit is a rigorous means test; but tax relief on private health insurance involves no means test whatsoever. It is simply an attempt by the Government to make private health insurance and private medicine certain to succeed, even if people do not want it, because the conditions under which it operates are equivalent to living in a tax haven.

We should resist that. It has been said many times during the debate, and it should be challenged, that it is indisputably true that, if someone uses the private health system, they are taking a burden off the National Health Service. I challenge that. I ask Conservative Members to produce the research that shows that the impact of private health care in Britain is taking a burden off the National Health Service.

If I am sitting in front of a consultant, and he says, "I can operate on you next week in the private sector, but I can only operate on you in six months' or nine months' time in the National Health Service," I want to know how that is relieving the National Health Service. I want to know how that doctor can efficiently keep his private health list down so that he can operate next week without shunting someone down his National Health Service list. How does he achieve that? How does he move someone up his private medical list without moving someone else down his National Health Service list? I want to know how that can be achieved, given that there are a finite number of doctors and consultants. What is the consequence of such a doctor giving priority to his private list? It is frequently alleged that the work is then done by the senior registrars or junior doctors in that specialty.

Mr. Conchman: From my experience as a former chairman of a health authority, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to know that many consultants are not contracted to perform full time for the National Health Service. Many of them work for the National Health Service for seven elevenths, eight elevenths or nine elevenths of a week. The rest of the time is their own to operate within the private sector. If someone has a hip operation in the private sector, where would he have that operation if he were not able to take advantage of the private sector? The work would be thrown straight back on to the National Health Service. I accept that he might be way down the list and that he has paid for the privilege of going up the list. That may be ideologically unhappy for Opposition Members, but ultimately every operation performed in the private sector means one operation fewer to be provided in a National Health Service hospital.

Mr. Worthington: There are 168 hours in a week, and that number cannot be increased. A doctor can operate for a limited number of hours. The more that that doctor operates in the private sector, the fewer operations he can perform in the National Health Service.

We have a great deal more to do. Unsupported assertions are being made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Opposition Members have asserted that the private health service is parasitical on the National Health Service, while Conservative Members have made unsupported assertions such as the one we have just heard. The necessary research has not been done to bear out my belief that when we support the private health system through such legislation as we are discussing today we further damage the National Health Service because no one will pay or should pay for that which is not worth paying for. People pay for the private health system because they get treated more quickly and are dealt with more rapidly.

Ms. Abbott: I have never had the pleasure or the privilege of chairing a health authority, but I am the daughter of a nurse. It is all very well for Conservative Members to talk about consultants, but it takes more than consultants to provide treatment for a patient. Private health care leeches off the work of nurses and ancillary workers.

Mr. Hanley: We have provided 60,000 more in the National Health Service.

Ms. Abbott: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should stand up and intervene. It takes more than consultants to provide treatment. It is the opinion of ordinary Health Service workers—not the chairs of health authorities, but nurses, ancillary workers, cleaners and other staff—that private health care does not provide choice but is a drain on the National Health Service resources, as the private sector trains no one.

Mr. Worthington: It is unfortunate that hon. Members on both sides of the House have tended to concentrate on those at the top of the system without taking into account the contributions that are made lower down.

In conclusion, I emphasise, that private health care flourishes in Britain because it is treated as a lame-duck industry that needs Government assistance in order to thrive. Inevitably it will thrive because it will be in the interest of the Government to create a two-tier system in which people are constantly forced to decide whether the National Health Service is providing an adequate service. If they decide it is not, they will invest in private medicine. I believe that, through provisions such as clause 51, the Government are driving more and more people to choose private medicine by accentuating the differences between private health care and the National Health Service.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Before I come to the main topic of the debate, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary two questions. I had not realised until the debate began that those who are not liable to income tax could claim tax relief. But if I understand clause 51 aright, even those who are not subject to income tax may deduct from their contribution to BUPA or PPP an amount equivalent to 25 per cent. of the premium. Clause 51(6)(b) states that the recipient of that contribution to a private scheme may

"recover from the Board an amount equal to the amount deducted."

Supposing that an elderly person, who is not liable for tax, who makes a contribution to a private insurance scheme, deducts 25 per cent. of the premium and the company to which that premium is paid is obliged to regard it as if the premium had been paid in full, can that private company recover from the Inland Revenue the amount of tax, even though no tax is payable by the contributor?

My second point is this. If I understood my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary correctly, he said, when responding to an earlier observation, that clauses 51 to 54 had been the subject of discussion with the European Commission. That came as a great surprise to me. When my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary replies to the debate, will he tell us in what circumstances we had to obtain clearance from Brussels for clauses 51 to 54? I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) is in his place on the Treasury Bench. He and I have a common view about the legitimacy of interventions from Brussels in affairs that we believe should be the responsibility of this Committee and this House. It would be of considerable concern to me if we had to obtain the sanction of either the bureaucrats or the Commission in Brussels for the proposals.

7.30 pm

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor, in his six years in office, has often proclaimed that part of his purpose is to move towards fiscal neutrality and he has already taken several steps in that direction, which I applaud. He has sought, for example, to diminish the perk of the company car, to which the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) referred. My right hon. Friend has removed tax relief on new life insurance premiums. Clause 51 is not consistent with his previously declared policy. As someone who approves of fiscal neutrality and who believes that it should be up to the individual to decide how to use her or his money, without pressure from the Government or taxation privileges, I am somewhat anxious that we seem to be going in a direction opposite to that in previous Budgets.

Even my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has not said that he wants to achieve perfect fiscal neutrality. He has persevered with tax relief on mortgage interest and with a tax arrangement that allows people to make contributions to retirement pensions and to deduct those contributions when calculating taxable income. Even my right hon. Friend has not said that complete fiscal neutrality is his goal, so the Committee must examine the extent to which the conferring of an additional element of discrimination in favour of particular taxpayers is justified. Clearly, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary believe that there are exceptional circumstances, as they believe there are in the cases of providing pensions and purchasing a house.

I want to devote the rest of my speech to the legitimacy of the claim about exceptional factors. This afternoon we are giving legislative effect to the announcement made in "Working for Patients". We have known about it since January, when the White Paper was presented to Parliament. The White Paper, which we are to debate on Thursday, is clear about the proposal. It says:

"There is already a growing partnership between the NHS and the independent health sector."

I pause just to add that I welcome that growing partnership warmly and to note that even the Labour party, and even the late Aneurin Bevan, when he set up the Health Service, did not seek to eliminate the private sector of medicine. Even those who sit on the Opposition Front Bench do not suggest that the remodelled Labour party is about to submit to the British people a policy for the abolition of private medicine. I am sure that I carry Opposition Members with me when I speak in praise of the independent sector of medicine and say that I welcome the growing partnership.

Page 68 of the White Paper says:

"In 1986, contractual arrangements between the NHS and the independent sector led to over 26,000 in-patient treatments".

Again, we are talking about lightening the burden on the Health Service and that is a particular example. That point was also made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who said that without doubt the existence of independent hospitals lightened the burden on the National Health Service.

I do not doubt that independent hospitals lighten the burden, so I can understand why my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said on Second Reading of the Finance Bill:

"If we can generate just a little additional demand for health insurance, that will relieve pressure on the National Health Service".—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 893.]

I agree with my right hon. Friend. We need to take such steps as we can to diminish the pressure on the National Health Service.

I want to read one final quotation. In our White Paper in January, we said that the purpose of what is now clause 51—which was then only a glint in my right hon. Friend's eye—was to

"encourage both the provision of medical insurance for older people and its take-up".

That purpose is laudable. When clause 51 comes into operation on April 1 1990, there will be an increase in the take-up of private medical insurance. A consequence of that will be to diminish the pressures on the National Health Service and there is not a single member of the Committee who would not agree that there are severe pressures on the service.

Despite my serious reservation about the departure from fiscal neutrality—a laudable goal that I share with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor—the proposal is justified in the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves and I shall support it in the Lobby tonight.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The clause is an act of political bribery. The Government are trying to gain a few extra votes at the expense of all those who are queueing up for operations. I find it incredible that they should have to play this game and introduce a scheme that will allow the rich—and perhaps those who are not so rich—between £40 million and £100 million more in tax concessions. That £100 million will end up in the coffers of the Government's friends in the private medical world—folk who will probably spend it on champagne when it could have been spent on medicine if it had gone to the National Health Service. The proposal is obscene, coming as it does after a massive lobby by people all over the country in defence of the National Health Service. It is incredible that we should be talking about a £40 million subsidy to people who do not need it and who can already choose private health insurance, when many people rely entirely on the National Health Service.

I recently met representatives of the Inverclyde Crossroads care attendants scheme. It would break hon. Members' hearts to meet the carers whom I met, who know that that scheme is to come to an end. The £40 million that the present measure will cost could have been used to save the country hundreds of millions of pounds.

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

Throughout Scotland care attendant schemes are having to come to an end because of lack of money. I know one old woman of 64 who is looking after her mother of 84. It broke my heart to see that woman cry. She knows that the care attendant scheme is to end in September because of insufficient funds. At the moment, carers come in two or three days a week to give that woman respite and allow her to take some time out from constantly looking after her mum. She does not want her mother to be in hospital or away from her; she wants to look after her until the day she dies.

The £40 million that the clause will cost could have spared that woman the trauma that she faces when the scheme ends in September. She does not know whether she will have to put her mother into care—which, after all, will cost the Government a vast sum. We are not talking about chickenfeed. If the scheme comes to an end, it will cost the Government about £3 million a year. What does it cost to run the scheme? It costs £1,000 a week—a miserable sum. For the sake of that sum, the Government are condemning nearly 60 families to a thoroughly troublesome time. They do not know where to turn now that the Government have turned their backs on them. The Government have not turned their backs on the rich—on those who can afford private schemes. The people whom I met cannot afford private schemes. They need the Government's help.

The Government have a golden opportunity. They can stop this madness. They can reduce the waiting lists. They can ensure that the Inverclyde Crossroads care scheme can continue by releasing money to it and to similar schemes that benefit the country and its elderly people.

I recently met carers in Linwood—another working class town where not many people can afford to belong to BUPA schemes. These folk rely on the National Health Service. Hundreds of people in that community are waiting for all kinds of operations—operations that cost much less in the National Health Service than they would in the private sector. A hip replacement operation costs £2,390 in the National Health Service, whereas in the private sector it can cost anything between £2,900 and £6,000. The Government are always talking about the free market and saying, "If it is cheaper, we must go for it." I do not know, for the life of me, why the Government should want to continue to subsidise private medicine and private health insurance when the National Health Service can do the operations more cheaply. It would be far better if the Government put the £100 million—perhaps £200 million—that the clause will cost into the National Health Service, where it would be much more productive. The Health Service could then conduct the operations which no private hospital can perform more cheaply.

This week I shall be meeting doctors in my constituency who are horrified about the Government's proposals. They are horrified that such measures can be introduced when they have been denuded of funds and when they despair of seeing their patients get proper medical treatment. Those operations are not operations that can be performed in months and years ahead; the patients desperately need them now.

I recently met a woman who is in absolute agony with her arthritis. She is waiting for a hip replacement, and she told me that she is walking in her dreams. She cannot relax or rest. The Government know that there are many men and women lying ill whose illnesses could be cured were it not for lack of money. The Government boast that they are putting money into the Health Service, yet they are squandering £40 million to £200 million in the clause. They can do something about the problem. They can ensure that we get the additional money that we need so desperately in areas such as mine by stopping this nonsense.

Schemes like the Crossroads schemes are worth their weight in gold. They give relief to families and job satisfaction to the paid carers who work in them. They give voluntary organisations a commitment to provide a service that they know is needed. The satisfaction that carers enjoy when they are granted respite has to be seen to be believed. I sincerely hope that the Government will listen to the cry for help for the Crossroads schemes in Scotland. I plead with them to listen to the cries of those who organise those schemes, which save the country millions of pounds and cost only £1,000 a week to support.

The clause is an act of barbaric piracy at the expense of the poor and the needy. The Government are wrong and they should renounce their mad commitment to supporting private insurance. All over the country people are waiting for help from the Government. At present, they can get help only if they have a few bob and can afford to join a private insurance scheme.

The Government can no longer turn their backs. Last week, they saw the result at the Vale of Glamorgan. I assure them that from now on at every by-election the electorate will return someone who opposes the Government's policies on the National Health Service—a needless policy that will result in more suffering. Men and women rely on their elected representatives to ensure that they get a fair deal.

It is time that the Government gave a fair deal to the ordinary men and women who have no money and who rely on state benefit and support and on the fairness of politicians. It is time that they promised to deliver a fair and just system so that those people can live in peace and comfort without the ills and pains that a properly funded National Health Service can alleviate. The Minister should listen to my plea and ensure that the Ardgowan hospice and others like it are given money to care for cancer patients. He should recognise that the carers are invaluable. The Government should forget their private insurance scheme and ensure that the carers receive decent help and support so that people can remain living in the community. They do not want to die in hospital.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): There has been some discussion as to whether the private sector assists or destroys the National Health Service. Obviously, many of the assumptions about whether clause 51 is an advantage or not will depend on that basic premise. I have heard nothing from the Opposition that has convinced me that the private sector does not act materially to the assistance of the National Health Service. I do not speak, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), as a former chairman of a health authority, but merely as an ordinary Member of Parliament. I was grateful a year ago for the private hospital in my area, when our National Health Service hospital, through a technical and not a financial problem, had to cease certain operations for many months. However, those operations were able to be carried out in the private sector. That is the sort of healthy alternative that I believe should be on offer and for which I for one am grateful.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) asserted that, if consultants split their time between the private sector and the National Health Service, that would not assist the NHS, but would simply assist queue jumping. He asserted that an increased number of people would not be treated on the National Health Service. I submit that that is based on what is the rather naive assumption that, if one did not let the consultants split their time, they would spend their 100 hours a week entirely in the National Health Service and would not rather choose to spend their time entirely in the private sector, thus denying the National Health Service much expertise.

I believe that the private sector assists the National Health Service and health provision in this country. It must be encouraged through all reasonable and equitable means. If one starts with that assumption and the assumption that alternatives to the National Health Service are an enhancing factor of the nation's health, surely it makes sense to say that a section of the population that puts an increasingly large burden on the Health Service should, especially, be assisted to choose to be treated elsewhere if they wish. I find it difficult to believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) could say, on the one hand, that he thought that the private sector enhanced health provision, but, on the other, that that was no reason for encouraging a section of the population that did not use it quite extensively to take it up. That struck me as an inconsistent attitude.

We know that there is an increasing number of elderly in the population and that they are becoming an increasing proportion of the population, but it is the tax-paying public who maintain the NHS. We, therefore, have a choice. We either encourage all the elderly to use the NHS exclusively and thus bear, through the tax system, the full cost of their treatment, or we say that, if they wish to have an alternative, they should be assisted. We would then bear the tax burden only of the relief which we are offering.

I believe that there is more to it than that. There is the social position and the dignity of old-age pensioners. Last year I welcomed what I saw as a major reforming Budget in the way that it gave recognition to the social and independent position of women. This year, too, we have had a reforming Budget, which gives much greater attention to the social position of pensioners.

Much has been made by the Opposition of the fact that tax relief is being allowed under clause 51 at the higher rate as well as at the basic rate of 30 per cent. However, if younger people are buying a house and pay a higher rate of tax, they receive the higher rate tax relief. If younger people buy a private pension or an occupational pension plan and they pay the higher rate of tax, they will receive the higher tax relief. Why, therefore, have the Opposition got it in for the old folk by saying that they should not receive higher tax relief?

Mr. Beith: The amendment is in my name. The hon. Lady must surely know that in the case of mortgage interest tax relief, too, I have consistently argued that that tax relief should be limited to the basic rate.

Miss Widdecombe: Therefore, I must withdraw my statement that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has it in for the old folks. He obviously has it in for everybody. I think we must just proceed to disagree on that basis.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield said that he did not understand that peace of mind was necessarily a major consideration, because there was no way that medical insurance could be comprehensive. It would not, of course, provide the long-term care which much of the NHS provides. That obviously must be so, but we should consider the fact that the elderly are the least able to take full advantage of many NHS facilities.

The elderly are liable to suffer from long waiting lists more than anyone else, because the advances in medical science which flow from the Government's considerable investment in the NHS provide surgical and medical advantages which disproportionately benefit the elderly —for example, the new simplified cataract operation and hip replacements. It means, too, that, when those advances are made, there is immediately a concomitant rise in waiting lists. Because the elderly are those who consume those services most, they are the ones who suffer from the rise in waiting lists. Whereas, if it is a rise in waiting lists for ordinary operations, an individual can choose quite reasonably whether to wait for a long time locally or to go elsewhere in the region, or perhaps elsewhere in the country, that choice is not so readily available to the elderly, who find transport difficult, who will not have young spouses to drive them and who will be less willing to be separated from their families. They need, therefore, a much increased choice, as they are less able to exercise the choice that already exists in the NHS for the rest of us.

Why should the elderly suffer a lowering of standards on retirement? It does not matter whether they have been paying for private medical insurance through their employers and that that is a benefit to the employers as well as to them. What matters is that they have had that advantage. When they retire and become dependent on a pension and thus a reduced income, the cost of medical insurance can have a major effect on the decision as to whether to keep up subscriptions. If we want the elderly to have the same opportunities and the same freedom of choice as the rest of the population, we must make it fairly simple for them to keep the benefits which they have always enjoyed. Because clause 51 states clearly that, whenever that benefit was acquired, the tax relief will be implemented after pensionable age, that will enable a pensioner to keep up a benefit that he has always enjoyed. It is really having it in for the old folks to say that they can enjoy a benefit right up to retirement age, but after that it will be made difficult for them.

I believe that this is a social as well as a financial piece of legislation. It will enhance health care provision. It will also improve the position of pensioners and bring them into equity with younger people who already benefit from a substantial range of reliefs.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I rise in support of the amendment tabled in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) that deals with the specific question of when, if ever, the scheme should be implemented. It appears that we have a fundamental and significant new tax relief that is, in fact, operating in the opposite direction to which the Government have previously indicated they intend to go. Only a minority of Conservative Members who have spoken have given their wholehearted support to tax relief on medical insurance. The hon. Members for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), and for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) all expressed reservations about the scheme, although it

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

appears that at least one of them—the hon. Member for Eastbourne—will persuade himself to vote with the Government.

The questions that have been raised relate to the fundamental issue of whether we are taking pressure off the Health Service by extending the number of people using private medical facilities. The answer must unequivocally be no. We are talking about the amount of money that the Government are making available to support the provision of medical services in the United Kingdom and whether the Government can provide more and better medical services by spending that money in the Health Service or by spending it in the private sector. On any set of comparisons, the only conclusion that any reasonable person could reach is that it is far more cost-effective and cost-efficient for the Government to direct their resources towards the National Health Service.

8 pm

Let us look at some of the factors involved. It currently costs an average of £415 to provide hospital care for a person between the ages of 65 and 74. Under one of the medical plans—a PPP plan—the amount of relief for the taxpayer paying tax at 40 per cent. will be a subsidy of £589 from the Government. For full medical cover for a person between the ages of 70 and 74, the Government will provide a £645 subsidy. That money could be better spent providing further medical treatment for pensioners within the Health Service.

Let us compare the occupancy rate of beds in the National Health Service with that in the private sector. There is an occupancy rate in the private sector of between 35 and 50 per cent. The Nuffield hospitals have an average of 61 per cent. and are the leaders in that area. However, in the National Health Service the occupancy rate averages 81 per cent. In Wales the figure is not quite that high. In 1978 the daily occupancy rate was 78·3 per cent. and in 1988 it was 77·3 per cent. Clearly, the National Health Service provides much more treatment in its beds than the private sector.

If the Government wish to target their resources effectively and efficiently it would be far better to provide resources direct to the Health Service than to provide relief for the relatively small number of people who would take advantage of such schemes. Indeed, the Government think that that number is likely to remain relatively small.

Several examples of specific costs of different types of surgery have already been given this evening. The cost of a tonsillectomy in the Health Service is about £360; in the private sector it is anything from £600 to £1,400. Obviously, somebody is making a great deal of money out of those costings. A hysterectomy costs £1,200 in the National Health Service but between £2,000 and £3,600 in the private sector. Where is it better to have that operation carried out? The answer is clearly, in the National Health Service. That is why the Government's scheme is so objectionable. It is an inefficient use of the resources that are provided for medical care in the United Kingdom.

We must also consider who benefits and whether the scheme is likely to be extended to more and more people over the age of 60. We have heard the argument about the numbers of people who will receive standard rate relief and higher tax relief, but a far larger group of people do not pay income tax and could receive the 25 per cent. subsidy if they paid for private health care. However, let us consider the cost of the health care that is available to them through private medical insurance. Even with the tax relief, BUPA has calculated that a couple, one of whom is over 70, who receive the standard rate of relief would still have to pay £17 per week. Can any Conservative Member imagine a pensioner couple, who are not liable for income tax but who have dangled before them the carrot of a 25 per cent. subsidy on medical insurance, being able to afford £17 per week? Of course, they could opt for the budget plan and would then have to pay only £10 per week, but that offers a much smaller range of treatment. A single person over 61 would have to pay £16 per week for the best range of treatments offered by BUPA or £10 per week if he or she opted for the lesser range of treatments.

However, we must remember that the majority of people over 60 would not be able to take advantage of any of the medical insurance schemes in any case. I am referring to people with on-going chronic illnesses. They are the people who most need attention but they would have no prospect of gaining any help from the schemes that have been forwarded by the Government in clause 51. About 60 per cent. of that group of people nationwide are adversely affected by chronic illnesses.

For people over the age of 74, the proportion rises to 69 per cent. In a country such as Wales which has a great tradition of heavy industry, those percentages are even higher. Although I do not have the precise figures to hand —I should be interested to know whether the Government have any information on this—I guess that less than one quarter of Welsh pensioners would be eligible for this misspending of our national resources.

If the Government wanted to spend that money effectively, they could tackle the ever-increasing waiting lists. We have heard protestations from Conservative Members about how, over the past year or so at least, more money has been put into the Health Service and more patients have been treated than ever before. However, the fact is that waiting lists are increasing. In Wales the out-patient waiting list has increased over the past decade by over 24,000 and the in-patient waiting list has increased by almost 300, yet more patients are being treated. We must ask ourselves why. Have the Government created such social havoc and deprivation that, despite treating more people, more people are still waiting for treatment?

I hope that this evening those Conservative Members who have expressed reservations will join us in the Lobby. The only sensible action for the Goverment to take is to get rid of the scheme by accepting the amendment and postponing the implementation date to 1993. Then the issue of the future of the Health Service and the best way that it can be funded to provide comprehensive and effective treatment for all can well and truly be at the forefront of a general election campaign.

I do not have to remind Conservative Members that the issue of the future of the Health Service was right at the forefront of the campaign recently conducted in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election where the Government were resoundingly beaten. The big difference between the Vale of Glamorgan by-election and any other recent by-election in which the Labour party has won a victory over the Government is that that by-election result did not rely on disenchanted Conservative voters not bothering to vote.

The Labour vote increased massively because Conservative voters switched to the Labour party, such was the depth of their discontent.

Measures such as the one before us persuade voters everywhere that the Health Service is not safe in the Government's hands and that the sooner a Labour Government can take over and get rid of such proposals, the better it will be for the country at large.

I hope that a sufficient number of Conservative Members, who have already expressed reservations about the proposal, will vote with us this evening. I notice that some Members who have publicly expressed reservations are not here this evening. One such is the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) who was reported in *The Observer* in March of this year as saying:

"A lot of my colleagues are concerned about this. It sets a dangerous precedent which could take us, in easy steps, to a two-tier health service.

We also think the Government is wrong because it proposes to offer tax relief to the better off, the people who need it least."

We are talking not merely about the efficient use of resources but of using the money for those who least need the help. It would be far better if the money were used for those who really need the help. I hope that our amendment will be supported this evening.

Mr. Couchman: I had not intended to speak during this debate but I have been so incensed by some of the things said by Opposition Members that I wanted to offer a few thoughts.

I shall first refer to the interest that I declared during the Second Reading debate on the Bill. It related to a specific company that I have lately advised but is not relevant to this evening's proceedings because those treatments which might be available under the relief which the Government propose are considered in clause 53 rather than clause 51. I should also like to make it clear that I have never paid a private health insurance life premium for myself or my family. We are National Health Service patients and have always been happy with the service that we have received.

One fallacy that Opposition Members have offered us over and over again is that the relief that the Government propose, whether £40 million a year or £100 million, will not add to the total of health care resources available in this country. That is absolute nonsense. Not only is this relief more beneficial than a direct contribution of a like sum to the Health Service, but it will encourage many people who are approaching old age, who have perhaps had premiums paid through company schemes—contributory or non-contributory—to carry on using the schemes.

I have just worked out a few simple arithmetic figures in relation to the money that may be available. If £40 million is the sum of relief that is likely to be allowed in the first year, even if, as suggested, 50 per cent. of that—£20 million—goes to higher rate taxpayers, it would bring in £50 million to the health insurance schemes. A further £20 million, based on 25 per cent., would bring in £80 million, which means that £130 million would be brought in. Even allowing for the 10 per cent. that BUPA finds it necessary to charge for administration—£13 million—it would seem that £117 million would be brought into the totality of health care resources. Even if some of that is deadweight, there will still be a net benefit over and above the £40 million.

8.15 pm

If we look at the figures based on £100 million, they seem much more impressive. Even if 50 per cent. is paid to those who pay 40 per cent. tax, £125 million will go into health care and £200 million will be brought in on the basic rate relief, which means that more than £300 million of additional money will be brought into the total of health care resources. The deadweight in this case will be smaller because it will be taken up in the lower figure. The scheme would provide a most worthwhile contribution to resources.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) talked about the contributions that consultants should make to the Health Service. I pointed out during his speech that not all consultants are contracted to the Health Service for 100 per cent. of their time. Many of them work part time for the Health Service, which is lucky for the Health Service because, in many cases, these people are eminent and bring excellence to the Health Service. They could devote 100 per cent. of their time to the private sector. The fact that they do not is a gain for the Health Service.

Comments have also been made that not only consultants contribute to private sector health care, but nurses and ancillaries. However, most of those people have opted out of the Health Service and are fully employed in the private sector. They often prefer the working conditions, if not the higher wages. Some nonsense has been talked about the drain on the Health Service that would be caused by the offer of this relief. I should like the relief to be extended beyond the elderly, but I recognise that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will resist any such suggestion.

Much has been said about whether waiting lists have extended under this Government. Thirty years ago there was no waiting list for a hip operation simply because no such procedure existed. Procedures that have developed during the past 30 years have benefited the quality of life of elderly patients more than that of other patients.

I welcome the clause which will allow many people, approaching or having reached retirement age, to continue to pay into private health insurance schemes and to enjoy treatment when it becomes necessary. Without any equivocation, I shall follow my right hon. Friend into the Lobby to vote for the clause.

Mr. Turner: The best contribution that we could make in this debate would be to show the country that the Government's claims that they are committed to the National Health Service are false. This is not an isolated measure; it is part of the calculated attack on the National Health Service which began a couple of years after the Government came to power.

Wolverhampton's local authority and, I am sure, authorities in the greater part of the country know to their cost that from 1982 onwards the Government have been reluctant to invest the money that is needed in the service. In the past two or three years there has been a campaign of intense destabilisation of the NHS. The Government have invested in it, but they must have realised that they were not investing enough resources to meet the demands of hospitals.

Throughout the past year people in my area, although desperately ill, have been turned away from hospitals. There have been deaths every week because GPs have not been able to admit seriously ill patients to hospital. There

[Mr. Turner]

have been cut-backs in all the acute specialties. GPs, consultants and hospital authorities cry out that they cannot meet the demands made on their services. District and regional health authorities have been told that they must run services with the available money, even though they know that it is not enough to meet the need.

A fundamental question is are the Government truly committed to maintaining, supporting and cherishing the National Health Service? The answer must be no. This legislation and the coming White Paper in the autumn are all stages in the process of destabilisation and the creation of a two-tier health system.

A false premise lies behind most of the decisions and policies of the Government. It is to be seen not only in the Health Service, but in education and housing. The Government continually pursue division, trying to drive a wedge between people and pit them against each other. A Government truly acting for the people would try to nurture policies that would unify them.

Earlier in the debate I said something that must be true and with which Conservative Members must agree. We all shared the terrible grief at the tragic explosion in the Grand hotel in Brighton. Did any of the people who were taken out of that hotel and placed in ambulances ask which hospital they were being taken to—National Health or private? Did they ask what sort of treatment they could expect? The truth is that they were grateful to be taken to a hospital in which they would get immediate treatment.

I am not talking about people planning months ahead to have tennis elbow treated or a wart removed. I am talking about real illnesses——

Mr. Couchman: No one has ever suggested that the private sector can possibly replace all that is provided by the National Health Service. Why will not Opposition Members see the complementary nature of the relationship between the private health sector and the NHS? By relieving pressure on what is known as cold or non-urgent surgery, the private sector makes its most valuable contribution to the acute services of the NHS, so that people on NHS waiting lists wait a little less.

Mr. Turner: I contend that this measure does nothing but weaken the resources of the NHS, and that it will have no impact on the vast majority, who are taxpayers. Most people in Conservative Members' constituencies and in mine do not want to take out a subscription to BUPA or join a private medical insurance scheme. They want the Government to do what is necessary to build up the NHS, to which they contribute through their taxes week by week.

Most of the queues of patients waiting for treatment are not affected by the clause. It is another signpost on the route which leads to further divisions between people and creates more disunity in the NHS—even though the measure is claimed to assist people over the age of 60.

The good news is that this will not wash. I should have thought that by now Conservative Members would have understood from what happened last week and from what people tell us every day that the country wants a National Health Service for everyone, and wants the Government to commit the resources to make that possible. This Government will not do that, but at the next election we shall return a Labour Government who will do what is necessary to reunite the Health Service and give a better deal to all who are ill.

8.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I shall be brief, and at the outset I apologise for having been absent for much of the debate, having been involved unavoidably at other meetings.

I shall comment on several of the points made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner), whose sincerity I accept. The argument that he adduced about our having attacked the NHS in the last 10 years will not wash because, as the Prime Minister pointed out earlier today, for every £1 that was spent 10 years ago, £3 is spent now. That cannot be described as an attack on the NHS.

The hon. Gentleman would do the Committee a service if he would investigate the issue and establish the pressures on the NHS which make it important for us to get extra funds into the service, and achieving that, at least in part, is an aspect of the discussion we are having now.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about what he called a hidden agenda for privatising the NHS. He is not alone in saying that. Many doctors are saying it to their patients. If he looks with sincerity at what is being said on this issue by Conservative Members, he will find that there is precious little argument in favour of privatisation.

Many Conservative Members have no health insurance and have relations working in the NHS—my wife is a junior hospital doctor—and have a tremendous love and abiding respect for the NHS and those who work in it. I assure the hon. Gentleman that privatisation is not on the agenda. If he is talking about mounting a campaign on the subject, I will join him on the barricades, but it is a non-issue.

The hon. Gentleman talked about our determination to weaken the NHS, for example, by the clause that we are discussing. But in the next breath he said that for the vast majority of our constituents the legislation would have no impact. It is important to recognise that hon. Members in all parts of the Committee want the NHS to be expanded and improved. Opposition Members are making heavy weather of the clause. It is not a major part of the Budget or the health review. It will make a modest contribution and have a beneficial effect at the margin.

As I reflect on correspondence that I have received in the last two years from constituents who will be affected by the clause, I think of the position of those who leave their firms and retire, having had the benefit and protection of a good health scheme while they were in employment, only to be exposed on retirement to the full market cost, at a stage in their lives where premiums rise steeply. As I say, this is a modest proposal which will go some way to alleviating the problem of that group of people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that the clause would be helpful to the NHS because it would remove responsibility for some elderly people, an area of care which is rapidly expanding. We appreciate the problems that are caused by the increase in the number of elderly people in the population. Magnificent medical advances have meant that many of our elderly constituents are living longer.

The measure that we are discussing will make substantially more money available for the NHS at a time

when the NHS is battling to help as many elderly people as possible—because many thousands of people will take advantage of the form of insurance, thereby taking themselves out of the NHS.

We have reached the stage when much of the care of the elderly already occurs in the private sector. I hope that Labour Members will get rid of the absurd shibboleth they have about private medicine. I put it to Labour spokesmen that perhaps in the next review of policy following the next general election, when they are considering the reasons for their defeat, they might put their attitude towards private medicine on the agenda for discussion at that time.

We are discussing a sensible proposal, but it seems to contain a small illogicality. If elderly people are to receive tax relief for an insurance premium, why should they not receive tax relief on medical bills that they pay themselves?

Having voiced my concern about that one illogicality, which I hope the Minister will examine on a future occasion, I support this proposal, which will make a modest contribution, and the effect of which will be entirely beneficial.

Mr. Battle: It will be widely accepted in all parts of the Committee that there is deep uncertainty and unease about the Government's intentions for the future of the NHS. Perhaps that is because historically the service has not been with us for all that long. Many people remember what it meant to have to arrange to pay for the best of health. Because of that, people are worried lest, before the system has been developed to its absolute best, the Government try to privatise it.

Throughout the debate we have heard Conservative Members try to argue both ways. On the one hand they say that they are fully committed to the NHS, and on the other they agree that they are committed to the principles of private health care. That is particularly demonstrated, we argue, when measures to support private health care undermine the NHS. The Financial Secretary must tonight spell out whose intentions lie behind the clause. Has what is proposed been squared with the Secretary of State for Health? Is it just a Treasury device that fits into the Finance Bill? Or is this simply the prejudicial preference of the Prime Minister?

Although the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) said there had been little argument in favour of privatising the NHS, shortly before he came into the Chamber I heard the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) try to make the case for a full blown medical insurance tax relief system, which I regarded as an argument for displacing, if not replacing, the NHS.

Others have tried to soften the blow by suggesting that the measures in the Budget are about helping pensioners. That is surprising when one recalls that the same Treasury spokesmen deal with the DSS, and later I shall speak about the way in which they have dealt with pensioners, not least by not uprating their pensions properly and by reducing the rates of housing benefit.

The general public are no longer sure whether the Government intend to shift health to the private sector, leaving behind only a residue of the NHS that we have known, or whether they intend genuinely to defend and extend the service.

The Chief Secretary said that the Government had no intention of going further than the clause in supporting tax relief for private health. I take assurances such as that with a pinch of salt because I remember, for example, the promises in the Conservative election manifesto to the effect that the child benefit level would be paid "as now". We discovered that that was meant literally, and therefore has been frozen for two years. We cannot rest secure in the Prime Minister's promise that the NHS is safe in Conservative hands because it seems from a report in *The Independent* on 15 April that there are pressures on the Government to extend tax relief in the private health sector. The article said:

> "The government is being pressed by some of its closest advisers on the National Health Service review to extend further tax relief on private care . . . Two proposals are being put forward: one to allow people over 60 who pay for treatment to claim relief; the other to allow the creation of special tax-free savings plans through building societies or other routes for private health care. The former move in particular could significantly increase the private health care market. For example, for a £4,000 hip replacement, those over 60—or the patients' relatives paying on their behalf—could reclaim £1,000, or £1,600 if they pay higher rate tax. The ideas have been put to officials by Dr. Michael Goldsmith, medical director of Medisure, the medical insurance advisers, who helped form the idea that GPs should become budget-holders able to buy hospital care; and by David Willetts, director of the Centre for Policy Studies, the right-wing think tank, who has been a key government adviser on the NHS changes."

According to the article, Mr. Willetts said:

> "I hope that tax relief will not cover just insurance, and that it will cover any direct payment mechanism. I would like to see mechanisms in which you would have tax relief on any of your own directly paid costs."

The article continued:

> "That could come, for example, if individuals used their savings to buy non-urgent health care."

Mr. Willets added:

> "I hope that we will get this through".

The Government should make it plain whether this is the last measure of its kind. Did the Financial Secretary mean it when he said that clause 51 will be the only relief on private medical insurance, which we believe undermines our National Health system? I agree with the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) who has been quoted today as saying that this is a dangerous precedent, taking us on the easy steps to a two-tier Health Service. This is not simply a matter of tinkering at the margins, as the hon. Member for Gedling said. This is a case of eroding the fundamental principles of the NHS, one of which is that it should be free to all at the point of use according to need. In other words, it does not depend upon a price and privilege model of health care in Britain.

One of the key phrases that could be used to describe the NHS is that it is a comprehensive service. The whole point of private health care is precisely that it is not a comprehensive service. That is especially true for the elderly, and that is why clause 51 is so strange. For a serious operation or long-term care an elderly patient will have to turn back to the NHS. The chief executive of BUPA has claimed that

> "Chronic illness is not a suitable subject for insurance."

And the Private Patients Plan no longer includes "long term illness" as suitable for insured treatment.

The 1986 general household survey shows that, far from this being a great boon to pensioners, only 4 per cent. of people over the age of 65 have any private medical insurance cover and only 1 per cent. of pensioners from skilled or semi-skilled manual categories are covered by any private medical insurance. No unskilled manual worker pensioners are covered. If this is a measure to assist pensioners who need help, it does not work—on two counts. It is not helping the poorest, and it does not help

[Mr. Battle]

their health needs when most are in need of substantial treatment because they come into the categories of chronic or long-term illness. It is exactly at that point that they have to switch back into the NHS.

Will the Minister confirm that 52 per cent. of the in-patient stays of people of all ages with private medical insurance are on the NHS? Private health insurers specifically exclude most of the pre-existing medical conditions and chronic conditions such as arthritis, senile dementia or loss of mobility—precisely the complaints from which most pensioners suffer. Sixty per cent. of people aged between 65 and 74 are classed as having a long-standing illness, and that figure rises to 69 per cent. for people aged over 75.

How on earth can this measure be said to be helping pensioners in their old age to receive health care? Even if they are wealthy enough to benefit from the tax concession, they will have to fall back on the NHS. This is supposed to be a health care measure, but it would be better to put the resources into the NHS rather than subsidising commercial medicine, which itself lives off the NHS, using its trained staff, facilities and resources. That should be taken into account when we evaluate the relationship between the NHS and the private sector. The Government do not have a mandate for private health care in Britain.

I was interested to debate at the weekend the state of the world today with a Conservative. He suggested that there are only two categories of people in Britain—the investors and the wasters. If that is the kind of outlook of the Conservative party, it, sadly, will write off millions of people in our society who do not earn enough to be investors. We are now being told that we must invest in our health care otherwise we will be wasters.

8.45 pm

Many pensioners, certainly those who I represent, know exactly where they stand on clause 51. They will not be coming to my surgeries to welcome being given the choice to move into private health care. I suspect that they will say that if the Government want to assist pensioners, rather than sales talk for private medicine they would prefer a decent pension. They would have preferred their pensions to have been uprated last year according to the right rate of inflation, not that in October, as a result of which their pensions went down this year. They would also prefer to receive full housing benefit which has been cut for the past four years. That way pensioners would have a decent income and be able to make real choices about their lives rather than see the wealthiest being offered incentives via subsidies in private health companies.

Some Conservative Members have said that this is a marginal measure which does not involve a great amount of money. If that is true, is it worth the trouble that will be caused by the possibility that this measure will open the door to subsidies for private health care? I urge Conservative Members to reject this measure and demonstrate their faith in the NHS. They should show that it is a marginal measure, not by removing the measure altogether but by suspending it now so that it can be put to the test at the general election. I hope that hon. Members will support the amendment and oppose clause 51.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Unfortunately, I have not been able to listen to all of what I am sure has been a fascinating and varied debate. However, what I have heard so far underlines my impression that the Oppostion parties' reaction to a pragmatic, limited and sensible measure is precisely the knee-jerk one that they seem to reserve for those people who dare even to think of providing for themselves rather than relying exclusively on the state.

Not only do the Opposition reject, purely for ideological reasons, measures which will inevitably increase the total resources going into the health sector, and attempt to deny the long-term and well-established trend which shows that people want to provide for their own demands, whether in housing, education, share ownership or pensions—which, as has been said, extends even to some trade unions—but, sadly, by arguing for a delay to 1993, they refuse to recognise the urgency of the demographic changes and the demand that they will create on the resources of the Health Service. To meet this a variety of funding mechanisms will inevitably be required, despite the massive increases in this Government's funding of the National Health Service.

The facts are there. Even at the present time 50 per cent. of NHS beds are used by people over the age of 60 and no less than 40 per cent. of the resources expended by the NHS are spent on elderly patients. By the year 2000 the number of people over 65 will have risen from 9 million to 10 million, the number of people over 75 will have increased by 43 per cent. and, according to an article in *The Economist* on 25 March this year, the number of people over 85 will have doubled to no less than 1 million.

These health demands will not go away. They will continue to impose themselves on health services per se in both the public and the private sectors throughout the country. Everything that we can do to ensure that state money brings forward additional finance from the private sector will help us to meet the inevitably burgeoning health demands resulting from the demographic changes that I have described.

It is obvious, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has said, that the provision of tax relief in this area, even assuming a rough balance between premium payments and treatment costs and a 10 per cent. administration levy by insurance companies on whose premiums tax relief will be available, and even assuming exclusively the top rate of tax, will mean a net gearing for Government funds which otherwise would not have been available of two and a half and, even at basic rate tax, possibly four times.

It really is nonsense to say, as the Royal College of Nursing does, that the demand for resources for the care of the elderly into the next decade is likely to become increasingly acute, and at the same time to put forward on purely ideological grounds the antediluvian argument that by denying choice to some will increase choice for everybody; that even though the 330,000 potential National Health Service patients who may take advantage of this scheme may only rely upon it for certain services, their doing so will do nothing whatsoever to increase the opportunities in the National Health Service for the less well-off who have to rely upon it exclusively. Logically, those opportunities must be increased, and to argue against that is to argue against the interests of the less

well-off patients who are at present waiting for operations which they would otherwise be able to have far more quickly.

The proposal has other advantages. As has been agreed by Help the Aged, the elderly in this country inevitably become wealthier and have more disposable income. This scheme should eventually increase competition and therefore cost effectiveness in the private health sector. It is worrying that 80 per cent. of treatments in the private sector are at present carried out by three companies and 50 per cent. by one alone, BUPA.

Mr. Battle: Would the hon. Gentleman then explain to me why Help the Aged is opposed to this proposal?

Mr. Coombs: Help the Aged approaches this proposal on precisely the kind of anachronistic ideological grounds as the Opposition. Yet at least Help the Aged recognises that an increasingly wealthy elderly population will demand the kind of services that other people have been able to demand over the last 10 or 20 years. I think that we ought to give them the opportunity rather than try to deprive them of it as the Labour party no doubt would.

Quite obviously, these proposals will increase demand within the private health sector and, as a result, the range of treatments offered by that sector is likely to increase, further reducing demands upon the National Health Service. They may also well improve preventive health care in the private health sector and thus lead to the wider introduction of services such as health check-ups and well men and women clinics, which at present are provided almost exclusively in the public sector. As a result, public sector health resources will be concentrated more accurately on those who most need them and who cannot afford to pay for them themselves.

I believe that these proposals are pragmatic. They go some way towards meeting an increasing need which will increase still further in the future and they provide for further resources with which to look after an increasingly healthy elderly population and enable it to improve further its own standard of living.

I would like to see these proposals go further. There is a case for the increasing number of people over retirement age who continue to work and who at present have their insurance premiums for private health care paid for by their companies to have these disregarded as taxable benefits.

Secondly, these proposals ought to extend not only to those pensioners with taxable earnings but also to those who have accumulated tax allowances. That would give us a successful scheme which I believe would have an enormous take-up, given the fact that this kind of health insurance after tax relief will make possible health care for £3 per week. That large take-up will enable elderly people in this country to emphasise their rejection of the ideological, Luddite, anachronistic arguments that we have heard from the Opposition Benches tonight.

I therefore support this scheme and shall have great pleasure in voting against the amendment.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The arguments of the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and other hon. Gentlemen have sought to prove that the £40 million relief funded under this clause will not drain the Health Service of resources but will strengthen it. I believe that in many ways what they have said is at the heart of this debate. The Opposition are seeking to argue that no one, rich or poor, young or old, should have to worry about having access to the very best in health care as represented by a strong and dynamic NHS, an NHS, moreover, which refuses to discriminate as to who it will and will not treat and stands as a model of care and medicinal excellence in a civilised modern society.

I do not believe that the provisions in clause 51 will shake the financial roots of the NHS. They will serve, however, to promote some fear and jealousy and a good deal of uncertainty in the minds of many who depend upon the NHS but whose lack of income in the form of the receipt of wages or pensions places them outside the ranks of those who stand to gain from clause 51.

In south Wales it will serve to deepen existing suspicions that these provisions are intended to help drive another nail into the coffin of the NHS. I do not expect the Government to understand that. They should understand it, though, because it was shouted at them time and again during the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. But I fear that the Government have become so arrogant, so sure of the infallibility of the increasingly mystical goals which are proclaimed from No. 10 Downing street, that they can no longer understand good advice or warning messages, let alone sheer criticism. But I heard those messages time and again during both the recent south Wales by-elections. The Government's goals may not have been quoted back at me word for word in the form in which they appear in clause 51, but people could recite without difficulty the philosophy that inspired them.

9 pm

I am new to the House, so my right hon. and hon. Friends will forgive my observation that I am startled that experienced and ambitious politicians such as those who were seated on the Government Front Bench earlier—young politicians even—are prepared to mortgage their political futures to legislation that is as wrong-headed as that encapsulated in clause 51. There can be only one explanation, which is that they have mortgaged themselves to such ideological nonsense in the vain hope of currying favour with the Prime Minister.

I bet that a few of them do not sleep too well at night—not necessarily because they are worried about the future of the Health Service or of its patients, but because they heard the shuffling of feet and the drawing of daggers in the darkness behind them. They heard the impatient, dismissive growls of the former Defence Minister, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), as he seeks platforms to argue for a more corporate attitude to state intervention, on Japanese lines.

Other Conservative Members heard the public plea, "It's got nothing to do with me, guv" from the present Secretary of State for Wales as he rushes from press conference to press conference stealing local authority initiatives and calling them his own, and doing everything that he can to convince the Welsh people that, like the right hon. Member for Henley, he is at heart a state interventionist. I have no doubt that Conservative Members wake in the night wondering how they can ditch that mortgage and survive when their political backers are put out of business.

How much better it would be if their nights were disturbed by misgivings, not about their political futures but the likely implications of clause 51 for the future provision of health care in constituencies such as mine. In my constituency, large centres of population are unable to

[Dr. Kim Howells]

afford the luxury of properly equipped, modern health centres. Clause 51 will not help to get them built. It will not help a community such as Tonyrefail in the north of my constituency, which cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called wealthy, but is full of hard-working, respectable people who have always sought to pay their way in life. They are people who have paid their national insurance stamp for decades and who display enormous patience and forbearance in tolerating an underfunded local health system.

Last Saturday, a constituent of mine from Tonyrefail who is employed at the Royal Mint at Llantrisant—one of the most modern money factories anywhere in the world—told me that the people of Tonyrefail are desperate for a modern health centre. I asked him where the doctors there hold their surgeries now, and he told me—in the converted front rooms of terraced houses, as they have done for the past 30 years. That is an indictment of a decade ruled by the present Government.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has squandered £60 billion of oil revenue, yet a hard-working, respectable community such as Tonyrefail does not have a modern health centre. Nor do many similar communities in my constituency boast their own health centre. The people of south Wales have grown used to the Government preaching the gospel of private provision in all kinds of sectors. We expected something like clause 51, and we fully anticipate that it will result in future shortcomings similar to those we have experienced in other vital sectors such as education, training and environmental control.

We witnessed at first hand that it is one thing to legislate for the private sector to provide an accessible, dynamic and comprehensive service to the general public, but it is another to convert that legislation into real results. As we have witnessed all too often in the case of the citadels of ideologically inspired government in eastern Europe, when good practice and common sense are shunted aside in the name of a political creed, it is the service and the people who suffer—as the people of Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Soviet Union are suffering now. The commissars, big-shot bureaucrats and hustlers can afford visits to private clinics in Switzerland or to private hospitals elsewhere for treatment. That scenario is one with which we in this country are becoming increasingly familiar. The chief commissar of Downing street, for example, boasts of her ability to choose dates, doctors and hospitals convenient to her. That was an insensitive and vulgar exhibition of the Prime Minister's lack of comprehension of the situation in which most of my constituents languish when they find themselves in need of surgery that is not considered urgent or of top priority.

The majority of my constituents have neither the personal wealth nor the facilities available to them to exercise a similar degree of choice. Nor do they have something else that the Prime Minister has—thank God. They do not possess that vulgar streak of exhibitionism that drives the right hon. Lady to flaunt her wealth and position and to boast of it in the midst of a society still fraught with long hospital waiting lists and in which respectable communities such as Tonyrefail are denied even the provision of basic facilities such as a health centre.

That is the real meaning of clause 51. It is another version of the Prime Minister's boast, another reprise of that increasingly stale melody that Conservative Members continue humming as they mortgage away their political futures. Clause 51 is another insensitive and vulgar gesture in the face of the vast majority of people, made at the same time that the minority are urged to celebrate their good fortune. Clause 51 is saying to them, "Rejoice, rejoice. Celebrate the fact that you're not someone who has to join the queues for surgery or suffer means-testing to enjoy even the most basic medication and health care."

More than 500,000 people are covered by the Mid Glamorgan health authority and they will not stand by in silence as its £149 million revenue allocation is whittled away and scattered around the shrine of the Government's barmy ideology. Those people made their voices heard last February in Pontypridd when the Tory vote slipped to third place behind the nationalists, and again last week in the Vale of Glamorgan, when the Tory vote dropped straight into the Bristol channel.

If I am to be candid, a part of me hopes that the Government will not modify legislation such as clause 51, because in that way their support will be eroded as it was even in an area such as the Vale of Glamorgan, which voted Conservative for the past 38 years. The public understand only too clearly the intention behind clause 51 and its ilk. It is not about improving the Health Service but about ditching responsibility for a symbol of collective care and of community.

The Prime Minister has made public her distaste for anything that smacks of community responsibility. If she is to surpass the vulgarity of her previous odes to the virtues of private medicine, she need only remind the public that if they find themselves unable to afford adequate health care in the privatised future, then they can chew aspirins. Supermarket shelves are full of them, and they are manufactured by the same transnational chemical corporations whose products poisoned us in the first place.

My constituents complain frequently that they need to take aspirin to counteract the pain that the Prime Minister's speeches and those of her Ministers give rise to in their heads—and in other parts of their anatomy a long way from their heads.

This year, Mid Glamorgan health authority's entire capital allocation is a little more than £7 million. The £40 million given away by clause 51 could solve a lot of problems that will not be solved because of the existing limit on that health authority's capital allocation. In my constituency there is a desperate shortage of nebulizers, for example, for the very young and very old suffering from asthma—as my own son does—and from pneumoconiosis and other respiratory disorders. They cost about £100 apiece, but many families in my constituency earn far less than £4,000 per year.

My constituents want to hear something more relevant to their needs than these hymns to private insurance. They want to know why the east Glamorgan hospital has not been replaced yet. It has 500 beds and its fabric is deteriorating rapidly. This Government's indecision on its future is causing demoralisation and great unhappiness among east Glamorgan's most excellent staff. They do not want this kind of irrelevant, divisive legislation. They want to hear the Chancellor make it abundantly clear that the Exchequer does not grudge the allocation of extra funds to promote health care at all levels for everyone in this country, and not simply for those who can afford it. That is the way to promote efficiency, well-being, a sense of civic

pride, a sense of belonging to a responsible, modern nation. Slapdash temporary buildings, patched-up wards and dependence on charity for purchasing vital medical equipment are not symbols of a responsible Government and certainly not symbols of a Government who care for the people.

The health authority in my area sighs with desperation and disbelief when it sees legislation such as this. The general manager informed me today that he needs funds for hospital redevelopment, for building maintenance, for investment in community care services, to make progress on their strategy in dealing with mental health problems and for general investment in new technology. We have dire problems of finance for our geriatric units at Dewi Sant, Tonteg and Rhiwfelin hospitals. The Hensol hospital for the mentally ill needs refurbishing and re-equipping, as does the Talygarn rehabilitation centre, which does such sterling work in returning the injured and disabled to meaningful employment, where they can help to top up the tax revenue collected by this Government.

Clause 51 will do nothing for the hospitals and health care in my area of the Mid Glamorgan health authority; nothing constructive, that is. It will simply confirm what my constituents know already, that this Administration lacks the basic decency which refuses to allow those who possess it to flaunt their new clothes publicly, like a kept tart, and kept this Governmnent have been: kept by the windfall of oil revenues, by a mean, parsimonious, grasping ideology, which takes from the weakest and rewards the strongest, as this clause seeks to do. However, it will not be kept for much longer. The people of Wales know that and the word is out. This Government and their vulgar, tasteless clause are on the way out. That is why I support the amendment tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), and I hope that the Committee will as well.

Mr. Beith: I had the opportunity earlier in our proceedings to talk more generally about our objections to this clause and my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) developed those arguments. I want to pick up one or two points referring specifically to amendment No. 21.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) has left us again, after a brief appearance in which he sought to comment on a number of speeches he had not heard, which was a pity because if he had listened to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) or even the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), with whom I usually find myself in disagreement——

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The hon. Gentleman was not here when my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) spoke, so how does he know?

Mr. Beith: I was very sorry, during a brief absence, to miss what may have been the first speech of his I have agreed with for a long time.

Mr. Lamont: I have never heard my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne speak without referring to the absence of the Liberals, which is normally his theme.

Mr. Beith: It is a very old sport between us, and I am sorry that he is not here now to hear the Minister make that point.

What the hon. Member for Wyre Forest did not appreciate was that the objections to this clause and the reservations about it are not of the narrow, ideological kind which he sought to suggest, but extend into his own party, for the very good reason that the idea of subsidising private health insurance is one to which there are many well-based objections.

A number of Government Members have spoken as if the argument were about whether people should be permitted to take out private health insurance. It is not —certainly not so far as I am concerned. It is about whether taxpayers in general should subsidise those who make this particular choice, and do so particularly at a time when, if the purpose of this is to devote revenue to the Health Service, that revenue could more usefully be devoted directly to the Health Service, and if it were, it would benefit more of those people in greatest need. When they argue that more money is becoming available for health care as a result of this clause, they seem to neglect the fact that it gives more money to health insurance for people who have already got it, and the vast majority of funds in the coming year will go to people who have already made the decision to take out private health insurance and do not need this clause to induce them to do so.

Ministers have made great play of the argument that the main purpose of this proposal is to enable people to continue to have the private health insurance which they began when they were in employment, rather than to extend it, but alas I cannot believe them because it is clear from many speeches today that the spirit behind those within the Conservative party who like this clause is to extend this principle far more widely.

Another Government Member argued that it is illogical simply to devote the tax relief to health insurance. It should, he argued, be extended to treatment as well, and I can see his logic that if there is to be a subsidy for public health insurance, why not put it direct to the treatment, to the person who has not got health insurance and is told that his only chance of a hip operation is to go private, otherwise he will have a long time to wait? Why should he not have the benefit of tax relief?

9.15 pm

Once this gate is open there is no limit to it, which is why Government Members should take more seriously the argument that the direction of these funds into the Health Service is a more cost-effective and better-controlled way of using them.

Referring to amendment 21, it seems to me entirely illogical that the Government should feel it neccessary to extend this tax relief even to the extent of top rate tax. Ministers have admitted this afternoon that 50 per cent. of the relief coming out of this clause will go to 20 per cent. of the beneficiaries. They have argued that 80 per cent. of those who benefit from it will be on the standard rate of tax, but 50 per cent. of the relief will go to that 20 per cent. paying top rate tax. To do this, the Government must have the machinery to allow these people to reclaim tax at the higher rate, and it would be cheaper administratively, as well as in terms of the relief being afforded, to exclude the top rate of tax from the provisions of this clause. I see no reason at all why the Government should not accept amendment No. 21.

I do not think that I could find very many pensioners in my constituency who regard this feature of the Budget

[Mr. Beith]

—or any other, for that matter—as helpful to pensioners. They will see it as further confirmation that the Government want the Health Service to develop on the basis that those who can afford to will be well advised to make some other provision for themselves, and will be helped to do so. That is not the kind of Health Service in which I believe.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Unlike many of those who have spoken in this debate, I have been able to attend the entirety of it, as indeed has the Government Front Bench. That is the way things work in this place, and quite right too. It is only fair that I confide to the Committee that the purpose of our amendment, although it only implies a delay in the implementation of clause 51 until 1993, is, of course, to do the clause in altogether. We anticipate winning the next general election, and the Labour party is certainly winning the by-elections.

The Committee has had a good trawl through the claims which the Government have made for the measure contained in clause 51, and essentially the Government's case has come down to two separate propositions. The Government claim that the scheme will help people who have had private health care cover during their working lifetime to continue with private medical insurance into retirement, when, as the Government have acknowledged, incomes fall and private medical insurance premiums rise.

The second, separate proposition which the Government have advanced for clause 51 is that it will reduce pressure on the National Health Service. As far as this side of the House is concerned—certainly as far as the Labour party is concerned—neither of those propositions has stood up to the scrutiny of today's debate. We regard the scheme contained in clause 51 as unfair, expensive and socially divisive, about which even those who genuinely support the Government have reservations. We were not surprised to learn from what I think are described as "the usually informed sources" among journalists, that initially the Secretary of State for Health and, indeed, the Chancellor strongly opposed the measure, and I find the denials that have been offered wholly unconvincing.

Many Conservative Members consider the proposal the first step towards more significant and far-reaching changes, seeing it as the starting point for a two-tier Health Service in which better-off citizens enjoy private medical care and separate, diminished provision is made for the rest of us. The hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), indeed, saw it as a starting point for other tax reliefs—applying, for instance, to private education—and said that he would never support that.

The Chancellor would have reasonable and understandable grounds for less than wholehearted enthusiasm about the scheme. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) pointed out that the right hon. Gentleman is trying to thin out the range of tax allowances available to be offset against income. Now, however, he is being forced by the Prime Minister to acquiesce in the introduction of a whole new range of income tax reliefs. The scope for tax avoidance is clear, and it makes nonsense of the Government's efforts to thin out some reliefs and cap others.

Much tax avoidance relies on a detailed knowledge of taxation regulations and an ability to fit the different bits together in such a way that losses can be offset against what would otherwise be taxable real earnings. Those who seek to reduce the scope for avoidance by cutting the number of reliefs available are fighting a losing battle against those who exercise real power in the Conservative party.

That should come as no surprise to anyone. The Conservative party is prepared to tolerate the abuse of the business expansion scheme and to allow the potential, indeed actual, avoidance in personal equity plans. It is willing to countenance a tax regime under which somebody earning £1 million a year could theoretically, if he made use of all the available allowances, pay no tax at all. In those circumstances, is it surprising that the Government are willing to acquiesce in this whole new territory for abuse—tax relief for private medical insurance?

I understand that even their own supporters have asked the Government to narrow the regulations as far as possible and to restrict the scope of the scheme. The political implications are obvious: tax concessions for the rich and a two-tier Health Service for the rest of us. The offer of tax relief is clearly of particular advantage to the better off. As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) has pointed out, it is they who need further financial concessions the least.

There was a rather ungainly scrap at the beginning of the debate: the Chief Secretary seemed astonishingly reluctant to confirm the facts contained in a parliamentary answer given by his right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. I think it would be helpful if I read out that answer, in which the right hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown):

> "Tax relief on private medical insurance for the over-60s will not be available until 1990-91, when about 330,000 tax units (single people and married couples) aged 60 or above are expected to qualify for tax relief on medical insurance. The average subscription per tax unit is estimated to be about £400. Around one half of the cost of relief is expected to be received by higher rate taxpayers."—[*Official Report*, 22 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. *588*.]

I am surprised that the Chief Secretary found it difficult to stand up and say, "Yes, that is correct." Perhaps, however, his difficulty was understandable, as the social divisiveness of the proposal is something that the Government are trying to minimise.

According to the Government, about 90 per cent. of the cost of the scheme will be attributable to those who already have private medical insurance. In other words, it is a straight concession to people who have already decided to make such provision without the incentive of tax relief. The implication is that only 10 per cent. of the estimated cost is to be laid at the door of those who find the new tax allowances attractive. That is the "year one" position, and that is the key to the Government's thinking. Why on earth make all the elaborate arrangements for deduction at source for the person making the payment, along the lines of the MIRAS scheme? Why ensure that higher-rate taxpayers obtain their rebates through adjustments of their PAYE codes if the measure is to have only marginal consequences? Why put such arrangements in train if the long-term implications are not extensive or important?

These are the kind of arrangements that would be introduced for a scheme that was intended to be used widely and to become commonplace in the British income tax system. That is incompatible with the claim made by the hon. Members for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for

Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) that this was not to be treated as any great event. I hope, incidentally, that the wife of the hon. Member for Gedling remonstrates with him when he gets home and she finds out what he has said tonight.

The Financial Secretary has told the Committee that the average subscription per tax unit is estimated to be about £400. That figure assumes the take-up set out in the parliamentary answer that I read out earlier. BUPA tells us, however, that the full cost for a pensioner couple can be as much as £2,160 a year, out of which the public will now have to finance payments of up to £860. It is not all as high as that, of course. BUPA claims that the cost of comprehensive cover when the older partner is over 70 will be £1,102 a year, cut to £827 by standard-rate tax relief.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To do a little fine tuning on BUPA's description of its insurance scheme, will my hon. Friend confirm that when BUPA talks about "comprehensive cover" it actually means cover for certain specified types of illness, and that anyone suffering from an illness cannot obtain insurance cover?

Mr. Brown: That is correct. BUPA operates a range of different schemes. I understand that the Government are to introduce regulations that will also limit the extent of insurance reliefs. BUPA offers what it calls a low cost scheme in which payments are restricted. Annual premiums under that scheme will be cut from £655 for a couple to £491 by standard rate tax relief.

Those are large sums, and it is difficult to see them as being comparable with the small sums mentioned in the parliamentary answer. For those searching in the bargain basement of private sector health care insurance there is a new senior prime care scheme—it sounds more like beef than health care —which offers a substantial no claims discount of 27.5 per cent. for those aged 65 or over. Of course, that is capped at age 75. The cost of that would be £458·20 per annum for a couple.

The assumption that must lie behind the Treasury estimate that the Financial Secretary gave to the House is that a small number of pensioners will opt for cheaper schemes. That assumption is surely wholly at variance with the arrangements that the Government are putting in place to handle the relief. Either the Government believe that this is the right thing to do and they want to encourage as many people as they can to take part in it, or they believe that it is small beer and nothing to get worried about. They cannot make both arguments, as they have tried to do in the debate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) emphasised that the scheme will do the Health Service no good and will certainly do it harm. If the Government had £40 million, or £200 million —the commitment is open-ended—to spend on health care, it should have been spent on the National Health Service so that everyone could benefit. There is no need to spend it on some citizens rather than on all. Depriving the National Health Service of the money does it harm. The private sector will not train nurses or provide long-term patient care. The private sector will not relieve pressure on National Health Service waiting lists and queues. The objective of the private sector is only to ensure that its clients can jump the queues by virtue of being private patients.

9.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) made the point vividly that a Government that cared equally for everyone would try to reduce waiting lists and ensure fair and equal treatment for all patients regardless of their economic circumstances. The Government are exacerbating the problems, not eliminating them. They are saying that the wealthy should have preferential treatment in health care. What use will the scheme be to the poor and the majority of British pensioners who do not pay income tax and cannot benefit from tax relief?

The majority of pensioners have no prospect of having their private sector health insurance premiums paid for them by wealthy relatives. The Chief Secretary tried to suggest that even poor pensioners could benefit if they were lucky enough to have a son or a friend who had become wealthy and was willing to pay for them. In those rare circumstances I suppose that they could benefit, but what are the odds of that happening? I was amazed that no one on the Conservative side suggested that poorer pensioners should think about clubbing together to form syndicates and offer themselves as tax loopholes to wealthy entrepreneurs along the lines of some of the schemes in business expansion projects. Perhaps encouragement of that is some way down the line.

Britain's pensioners will have lived through the second world war. Many of them will have served their country during that war. They will all have paid their taxes and national insurance contributions throughout their working lives. Now, rightly, they believe that they are entitled to the best health care that the country can provide for their retirement. No one on the Labour side sees anything unreasonable in that. The Government are telling them that they can have the second-best health care that the country can provide or that they can take out private medical insurance. The Government echo the highwayman—"Your money or your life." That is a disgraceful, grotesque, unfair and callous message from Britain's most publicised granny.

What is a pensioner who has waited for a hip replacement for perhaps more than two years to think when he sees a privately-insured pensioner having the operation carried out straight away in a National Health Service hospital, using National Health Service facilities, but paid for by private medical insurance? The majority of pensioners who will be in that position will not consider that to be anything but grotesquely unfair. It is the socially divisive nature of the proposal that is its main condemnation.

The cause of delays in National Health Service operations is not administrative. In one local health authority in the northern region consultants were startled to receive a memo from the administrator asking them to refrain from carrying out expensive operations until the end of the financial year. When the consultants protested, they got a further memo asking them to try to carry out cheaper operations until the end of the financial year. Life is not like that, except perhaps for accountants. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) said in an excellent intervention, health care should be delivered at all levels and not just to those who can afford it. Those sentiments will be echoed by every Opposition Member.

The issue is not solely about resources. Private medical care will not create extra facilities in the National Health

[Mr. Brown]

Service; it will redistribute the use of existing facilities. Conservative Members have argued that the private sector is more cost-effective than the public sector. I have some figures showing the comparative costs of operations in the private and the public sector in the United Kingdom. I apologise to the Committee as the figures are a year old, but the differentials still stand.

Depending on the extent of the operation, the cost of a hip replacement operation in the private sector is £1,750 rising to £3,350. The National Health Service bill is a set £3,300. The National Health Service bill for a hysterectomy is £1,200 and the private sector bill is almost twice that at £2,200.

Mr. Couchman: Are the costs that the hon. Gentleman has just quoted for National Health Service treatment in hospitals where the costs are low, high or average? I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may be quoting those figures to present his argument in the best light.

Mr. Brown: The figures were obtained from *Hansard* on 28 January 1988. They were supplied in a parliamentary answer, so I presume that they were designed to fit the interests of the Government rather than those of the Opposition. If they do not sustain the Government's case, all I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that the truth will out.

Mr. Couchman: The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the complaints, worries and concerns of those of us who follow health care matters closely is that some hospitals within the National Health Service are vastly more efficient than others. Clearly, they are able to deliver more effective and therefore probably cheaper services than other hospitals. It is well known that some of our centres of excellence are comparatively expensive in delivering treatment.

Mr. Brown: The evidence that I am citing shows that the private sector is comparatively expensive, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out. I can quote him the example of a hernia operation. I have a range of figures from the private sector from £660 to £1,270, a separate source gives the cost at £890 and a further source quotes £1,000. Those are all private sector quotes. According to *Hansard*, the cost in the National Health Service is £650. Those are substantial differences. The hon. Gentleman can say that I have picked the examples that suit me best, but I have quoted all the private sector quotes that we received, not simply the ones that suit my case best. I could have simply quoted £1,270, but I quoted all the figures from every source. Even the lowest quote from the private sector was more expensive than the National Health Service. That underlines my point.

When the Chief Secretary, in a slightly embarrassed manner, hacked his way through what I thought was an unconvincing justification of the Government's position, and knocked lumps off the Financial Secretary in the process, some Conservative Members took part in the debate.

I enjoyed the brave, reflective and well-measured speech by the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern). His was the authentic voice of what used to be the Tory party before the current leader got her hands on it. He weaved compassion throughout his speech.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) made an able, measured speech urging caution, particularly on taxation. I wholly agreed with him. I shall do him a great deal of harm, but just for once the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made a great deal of sense on the points that he raised about taxation. I agreed with what he had to say up to the point when he said that he would vote for clause 51 anyway. There is no need for him to do that, as he is no longer a Minister. He should exercise his independence and do what his heart tells him to do, which is to side with the Labour party. The people of Eastbourne will forgive him—on this occasion.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): That is an important qualification.

Mr. Brown: It certainly is in Eastbourne.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) brought to the debate the voice of a doctor, a professional man who knew what he was talking about. It is interesting that the first interventions in support of the Government came from merchant bankers, as one of my hon. Friends pointed out, but the speech that made the most telling impact came from a member of the medical profession. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy pointed out that clause 51 is irrelevant to the nation's health needs. It is designed not to supplement the National Health Service, but to change its nature. My hon. Friend was speaking for the whole of the Labour party when he said that we are implacably opposed to the proposal. We are opposed to it on philosophical and economic grounds, and on the ground of social justice. I urge the Committee to support the amendment and to reject clause 51.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We have had a lively debate in which there have been some strong speeches from Opposition Members and some excellent speeches, not only from those to whom the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred, but from my hon. Friends the Members for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), Fulham (Mr. Carrington), Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), all of whom supported the Government's policy enthusiastically. As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East said, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), after judicious and judicial deliberation, also supported our policy and we welcome that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne asked whether clauses 51 to 54 had been discussed with the European Commission. The answer is no. There is no need to discuss the clauses with the Commission, but we have had to take account of EC law in framing the provisions and that relates directly to the point that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made and that he encapsulated in amendment No. 8. One of the benefits of the wide market within the European Community, as he knows, is that the United Kingdom financial services industry has the opportunity to compete within Europe. That opportunity extends to the non-life insurance services on which an EC directive becomes fully effective next year. It is, therefore, right that as long as United Kingdom insurance companies are able to market non-life insurance in Europe, European insurers should be able to compete for business in the United Kingdom on equal terms with British insurers. That is why clause 51 offers the new tax

relief when medical insurance cover is provided by a Community insurer, as well as when it is provided by a British insurer.

The relief at source scheme will not be available when the insurer has no presence in the United Kingdom. In that case, the individuals themselves can claim the relief from their tax office. The benefit of tax relief goes to the person taking out the insurance policy, not to the company.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked about the taxation of insurance companies and provident associations and what happened if they did not pay tax. The amount claimed back has nothing to do with the insurer's tax liability. It is the relief that the subscriber has withheld on his premium that matters. I hope that that answers the right hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Denzil Davies: On the point about the EC directive, does the Prime Minister know about that? And did I hear the Minister say that an EEC insurance company that was not trading in Britain cannot claim back from the United Kingdom Inland Revenue the tax that has been deducted in paying the premium? Is that what the right hon. Gentleman said?

9.45 pm

Mr. Lamont: I said that relief would have to operate in a different way. The company would not be able to get relief at source, which is a different matter——

Mr. Davies: Will the European insurance company get the tax back? I am not concerned how it happens, but does the relief go to the insurance company in the end?

Mr. Lamont: The answer is no.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne asked another question about non-taxpayers claiming relief. There seems to have been a degree of confusion about the matter. Non-taxpayers can benefit from what is proposed; the insurer can claim the amount even though the individual is not a taxpayer. That is not a new principle. It is precisely what happens with mortgage interest relief—with MIRAS. The fact that relief is available for non-taxpayers is one answer to those who say that the scheme is only for the rich and that it benefits only the better off. I emphasise that, in operating a MIRAS-type scheme for health insurance, the Inland Revenue auditors will be checking the insurers' books to ensure that the scheme is being operated wholly properly, just as they do with MIRAS.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Is the Minister aware that an EEC directive that is currently being discussed would allow small companies not to be subject to compulsory audit? I know that the Government are against that aspect of the directive, but if it were introduced surely what the Minister has just said would no longer be true.

Mr. Lamont: An Inland Revenue audit has nothing to do with a statutory audit for Companies Act purposes, so the hon. Gentleman is slightly off beam, I am afraid.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) asked whether the non-taxpayer would still have to fill in a form. The answer is yes. He would still be allowed to benefit from the tax relief, even as a non-taxpayer. I stress the role of the Revenue in looking at companies' books.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli suggested that people might take out insurance shortly before they went into hospital as a means of obtaining tax relief, rather like the man who takes out fire insurance just as his house begins to catch fire. In the first place, I think that it would be difficult to persuade the insurance company to give the relief, and in any case it would certainly not be approved by the Revenue.

Opposition Members asked about the deadweight cost. There are about 300,000 medical insurance policyholders aged over 60 at present. The cost of £40 million in 1990-91 is based on the assumption that there will be a further 10 per cent. take-up in that year on top of the growth that we would otherwise have expected. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) stressed the deadweight and how little additionality had been provided for. We strongly hope that people will take advantage of the relief and, although we are making only a modest assumption in the first year, hon. Members should remember that it is only a first-year cost.

While emphasising the deadweight, Opposition Members have said, slightly inconsistently, that the cost of the measure could be very high, depending on the take-up. They advanced some alarmist arithmetic to suggest that if there were a 100 per cent. increase in the number of pensioners with provision for private health insurance, the cost might be hundreds of millions of pounds. Even a 100 per cent. increase in take-up would increase the cost only to £70 million. Opposition Members have made that mistake because they greatly overestimate the cost of a typical health insurance policy taken out by elderly people.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East paraded some figures. He must have carried out much research to find the most expensive policy available, because the real facts are different. A policy of the sort most commonly marketed to the over-60s currently costs about £450 a year for a couple aged up to 69, rising to about £600 at age 70. The cost of tax relief will on average be less than £100 per head.

Equally, the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) talked about PPP insurance cover for someone aged 65 to 74 costing £670 in tax relief. I have the PPP leaflet here and the annual premium for its retirement health plan for people aged 70 to 74 is just over £300, on which tax relief at 25 per cent. would be £75. The cover for someone aged 65 to 69 would cost even less.

Mr. Win Griffiths: From memory, the figure that I quoted was for a couple, one of whom was over 70. It was not for one individual.

Mr. Lamont: I have put the facts as they appear in the leaflet.

Mr. Battle: Many people take out minimum limited cover.

Mr. Lamont: Of course, as the hon. Gentleman just shouted out, many elderly people take out limited cover and the cost of that is much less, and so, too, is the tax relief. I do not see anything about which to apologise.

A number of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friends the Members for Beaconsfield and Horsham (Sir P. Horden), made it clear that they had a number of reservations about the clause. My hon. Friends the Members for Horsham and for Beaconsfield made it clear that their objections are very different from those put forward by the Opposition. My hon. Friends made it clear that their main objections were on grounds of tax policy.

[Mr. Lamont]

They believed that there should be fewer reliefs but lower rates. We have, of course, always made it clear that it would always be difficult, and probably not possible, to reach an entirely neutral tax system. As my hon. Friends know, we have certainly abolished some tax reliefs, but we have created others where we have thought they were socially or economically desirable. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield said that he thought that tax relief for saving or enterprise would be his choice, but why not also tax relief for helping the elderly or for relieving pressure on the National Health Service?

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield suggested that, perhaps, we should have a cap on the relief, which was a point made by a number of Opposition Members. An analogy was drawn with relief only being allowed on the first £30,000 of a mortgage. However, there are limits on the amount of money that one can spend on medical insurance. What one is allowed to spend it on will be limited and defined in the regulations that will be specified under the Bill. We believe that the average cost will be about £100.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred to comments made by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and my written answer. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no inconsistency between myself and my right hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend was right when he said that up to 80 per cent. of those covered will be basic rate taxpayers or not liable to tax. Opposition Members have not realised the difference between those paying the premiums and those covered by the premiums. My right hon. Friend's assertion is in no way inconsistent with my parliamentary answer, when I said that we expect that slightly more than half of the cost of tax relief will go to basic rate or non-taxpayers and half to higher rate taxpayers.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred to schemes which provided private sector treatment only if treatment was not available within the NHS within a few weeks. He asked how the schemes would relieve pressure on the National Health Service. I advise him that such schemes offer genuine medical insurance and, although they give a limited form of cover and a limited availability of private medical treatment, the premiums are lower and, to a limited extent, they still relieve the pressure on the National Health Service. Therefore, they qualify for the relief.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to the schemes that are offering cash benefits. We do not see why schemes that offer cash benefits should qualify for insurance because the whole purpose of the provision is to relieve the pressure on the National Health Service, not to give cash benefits unrelated to medical care. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield picked up, we have allowed a de minimis amount of £5 per day, but I emphasise that that £5 per day is in addition to medical cover being provided. It is supplementary to that. There is no question of people getting tax relief for cash allowances without having private medical treatment.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I understand what the right hon. Gentleman means about de minimis and, although £5 per day tax free may be de minimis to him, it is quite a lot of money to many old-age pensioners. I am not sure that that exclusion in the regulations is not intended to help sell the schemes.

Mr. Lamont: I very much doubt that because many of the cash amounts that are provided through schemes are substantially higher than that amount. In terms of the tax relief, the cost of £5 for the relatively short period of most illnesses is absolutely minuscule and does not add to the cost of the scheme.

We believe that the scheme is justified. It is targeted and limited. It is aimed specifically at elderly people—at the over-60s. We have explained that we believe that many people who may have had company schemes and who may have contributed to private health insurance during their working lives find difficulty in maintaining such payments in retirement and that it is right to help them in that situation.

Opposition Members have said that the money would be better spent on the National Health Service, but it is not an alternative. We are talking about an additional modest sum of £40 million, which is 0·15 per cent. of the total spending on the National Health Service and 1·6 per cent. of the increase in 1989-90. As my hon. Friends know, we are increasing spending by £2·5 billion this year and by £2·5 billion next year. That is a total increase of £5 billion in our spending on the National Health Service. A small, modest tax relief amounting to £40 million will help the Health Service in a different way by relieving the pressure on it.

Opposition Members have also said that the provisions will undermine the National Health Service. I do not believe that for one minute. The fact that we have committed such huge resources to the National Health Service is evidence of that. The proportion of GDP spent on the National Health Service is higher today under this Government than it was under the Labour Government. That demonstrates that we have no intention of undermining the National Health Service. I repeat that the provision is designed to relieve pressure on the National Health Service. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) wondered how, but, by definition, a person using the private sector is not using the National Health Service.

It is a fallacy to believe that medical resources are somehow fixed and limited and that they cannot be increased in response to extra demand. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield said that he did not doubt that and that he was satisfied that there would be some relief of the National Health Service but that he wondered why we had to have tax help as well. We believe that, over time, it will be a good bargain. The cost of the tax relief will be only £100 per person and the cost of the National Health Service per person over 60 is £850 for hospital treatment and £1,000 for the National Health Service provisions as a whole. Therefore, over time the tax relief will be cost-effective, notwithstanding the inevitable deadweight in the initial stages.

We do not see the growth of the private sector as a threat to the National Health Service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne said, we want a partnership between the Health Service and the private sector. As he said, it is part of the philosophy of the White Paper that the two should grow together. The growth of the private sector is not a bad thing.

Tax relief will generate additional resources. In an excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding said that someone will obtain the tax relief only if the resources are provided for private health out of his own pocket. The total resources made available are not just the cost of the tax relief but of the person's expenditure on top of the tax relief. For a 40 per cent. taxpayer that means that the tax subsidy will be multiplied two and a half times. That is how extra resources will be brought into the Health Service as a result of this relief. That is how pressure on the National Health Service will be relieved.

I do not believe, as Opposition Members seem to do, that resources are finite, or fixed and cannot be increased. This relief will help health services both public and private. Therefore, it is in the interests of everyone in the country and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Question put, That the clause stand part of the Bill:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 238, Noes 183.

Division No. 191] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ty)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, John P.
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

Clause 51 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

10.15 pm

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Sir Paul. On 5 May the Minister for Local Government wrote to me and to all other hon. Members, presumably yourself included, saying that he was aware how important it was to make sure that people knew about the community charge——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I must stop the hon. Gentleman. We are in Committee on the Finance Bill. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order, but even if he is I cannot take it in Committee; I can take it only when we are sitting as a House.

Mr. Madden: I understand that, Sir Paul. Before you took the Chair this matter was raised under points of order. As the Leader of the House is in his place, I wish to ask when the Government will make a statement advising us what action is being taken to stop these leaflets being put through the letter boxes——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. That is not a matter for the Committee of the whole House. The hon. Gentleman must seek some other way to raise the matter that concerns him.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We are in Committee of the whole House and I hope that I have made it clear to the Committee that I cannot deal with such a matter now. I doubt very much whether it is a matter for the Chair anyway, but it is certainly not matter for me as Chairman of the Committee of the whole House.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Sir Paul. In view of the circumstances in which the Government have been spending money, would it be possible for you to allow a manuscript amendment to the Bill at this stage in order to remove the Government's authority to spend money on these deceitful leaflets? The Minister has been running rampant doing this——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is very ingenious but in no way could that be made in order on the clauses we are now discussing. We now come to——

Mr. Madden *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I have tried to make it clear twice to the hon. Gentleman that I cannot conceivably take a point of order on the community charge while we are in Committee of the whole House considering the Finance Bill. I must reiterate that the hon. Gentleman must find another way to raise the matter which concerns him. I cannot take it now.

Mr. Madden *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am on my feet. We are in Committee on the Finance Bill. The points of order

which have been raised are not matters for the Chair and are certainly not in order on the proceedings of the Finance Bill, with which we must now get on. Mr. Alan Beith.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Sir Paul. You are absolutely right on this matter because it is difficult chairing meetings for a long time. However, I wonder whether you would be prepared to accept a manuscript amendment in the guise of a new clause to the Finance Bill in order to provide surcharges on those Ministers who have been spending taxpayers' money on these leaflets, just as you would if this were a local authority? Will you accept a manuscript amendment?

The First Deputy Chairman: I regret to say that I cannot do that. We must deal with the amendments on the Amendment Paper and we must be fair to those hon. Members who have amendments in their names. Mr. Alan Beith.

Clause 33

CORPORATION TAX: SMALL COMPANIES

Mr. Beith: I beg to move amendment No. 14, in page 23, line 5, leave out '£150,000' and insert '£250,000'.

This concerns a form of relief to small businesses and I am bound to say that it is a much better way of spending taxpayers' money than on tendentious leaflets about the community charge, which I have received since my copy has already come through the door. Moreover, I think that those for whom this amendment is designed as a benefit, small companies, which contribute so largely to the public revenues, will feel very strongly that the funds they contribute through taxation should not be used for propaganda in pursuit of Government policies.

I am sure that in considering my amendment the Minister will feel even more impelled to accept the greater relief I am suggesting, covered as he is with guilt through the activities of the Government in publishing at taxpayers' expense leaflets about the community charge.

Mr. Madden: Does the hon. Gentleman, think, like me, that it is very important that this Committee, as it is concerned with small businesses and the business rate system, should be told what action the Government will take to recover the leaflets which have been put through the letter boxes of many of our constituents?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not spoil his amendment by getting out of order.

Mr. Beith: I will certainly do my best to keep within order, Sir Paul, and to avoid your chastening.

It is the sense of many small businesses that this Budget is certainly one of some disappointment. There are many specific measures that small businesses would have liked to see in the Budget in a number of areas. The area in which the Government have taken some action on the lines which we proposed is one on which I will argue that they ought to have gone considerably further.

In our Budget proposals before Budget day we put forward the view that the threshold below which small businesses pay the lower level of corporation tax should be raised to £250,000. The Government agreed to a much smaller increase to a threshold of £150,000 based on a rate fixed in 1982, so it has remained at that level for a long time. There is an argument for making the relief more extensive. However, while the amendment would benefit many small manufacturing firms, it does not cover the whole range of small business including sole traders and very small firms, whose activities fall far below the scope even of the relief I propose.

The Government recognise that the present rate of corporation tax for small businesses is one on which relief could reasonably be raised. The Government get a great deal of money out of corporation tax. It is one of the most buoyant elements of revenue, and the Government continue quietly collecting that money without much public recognition of the contribution that business makes. The Chancellor is happy to talk about his Budget surplus and what he plans doing with it, but he does not seem so keen to explain how much of that surplus comes from asset sales and how much from corporation tax.

One paradox is that corporation tax rates in this country are lower than in competitor countries, but that British companies pay more corporation tax than their European competitors. One can speculate as to why that is so. It could be because of greater compliance, more stringent enforcement, or different systems of relief. The fact remains that British businesses pay heavier amounts of corporation tax than do their Community competitors.

One business sector particularly in need of relief is smaller manufacturing companies. Many of them are bearing the heaviest burden of the present high interest and high exchange rates. Some of the largest companies have considerable cash mountains at their disposal and are not the victims of high interest rates. Many gain substantially from them. All those involved in exports are affected by exchange rates, but the combined effect of high interest and high exchange rates bears most heavily on smaller firms. Companies that should now be preparing for 1992 face increasing costs, such as those involved in third party verification of products standards. Nevertheless, they feel a compelling need to improve their export performance. The Chancellor's whole Budget strategy is based on the assumption that there will be a massive improvement in our country's export performance. The major contributors to any such improvement must be smaller manufacturing companies, for whom I argue that a greater level of relief should be provided.

The Government's main argument against reducing corporation tax is that that might add to wage inflation by reducing pressure on employers to control their labour costs. That contention cannot apply to smaller companies, which are not the culprits in fuelling wage inflation. They are not usually the leaders in the pay round, and often are among those that have worked hardest to trim their costs so that they can stay in business.

The threshold at which those smaller companies become eligible for the higher rate of corporation tax should be raised not just to £150,000 but to £250,000. A related amendment increases the other end of the scale from £750,000 to £1 million, so that it will remain smooth between those two points. That is one way that the Budget can be made more helpful to small firms, and one that Conservative Members should find to their liking. I hope that some hon. and right hon. Members who have stayed on to listen to this short debate will join us in the Lobby tonight and support a higher level of relief for smaller businesses than is proposed in the Budget. I invite them to do so.

[Mr. Beith]

10.30 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) moved his amendment concisely and briskly. He paid tribute to the interest his party has in small businesses and in that he is echoing the interest that the Government have. My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) put a shrewd question to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27 April about tax concessions, which was specifically directed to small businesses since 1979, which was answered by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. It ran to two and a half columns in the *Official Report*. I have no doubt at all that small business men in Somerset, who read eagerly the questions put down by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, responded enthusiastically to that information and that that was in part responsible for Somerset being wrested from the hon. Member's party during the recent county council elections.

The hon. Member asked why, with lower rates of corporation tax, we achieved higher yields, and suggested it was either compliance or the quality of the surveillance by the Inland Revenue. The answer of course is the extremely successful and high rates of profitability being earned by British companies during the economic expansion we have enjoyed for the last seven or eight years. He made reference to interest rates, but small companies in particular wish to see a reduction in inflation, to which those interest rates are directed.

As to the merits of the hon. Member's amendment, the background to the lower rate of corporation tax, the small companies' rate, is familiar to the Committee. Clause 33 increases the profit limits for the small companies rate and the associated marginal relief to £150,000 and £750,000 respectively, as the hon. Member said. The Government's changes in recent years have concentrated on bringing the rate of corporation tax down, so increasing the profit limits has not been a high priority and the limits have remained unchanged since 1983. This year we thought it right to increase the limits substantially.

The two amendments which the hon. Member has tabled would increase the profit limits even further. In our view, those limits would be too high. Clause 33 already increases both limits by 50 per cent., which is more than enough to take account of inflation over the period since the limits were last raised. Over 20,000 companies will pay less tax as a result of this change. This represents half of those companies which were previously paying corporation tax at a higher rate than the small companies' rate. We think the new limits we have proposed are high enough.

There is another objection to adopting the limits the amendments propose. Under our present proposal the special rate of corporation tax which applies to company profits between £150,000 and £750,000 will remain at 37½ per cent., because we are increasing both limits by the same proportion. If the limits were raised, as the hon. Member's amendments propose, to £250,000 and £1 million, the marginal rate would have to be 38½ per cent. I know that some companies are convinced about the disincentive effect of high marginal rates, and we would be very reluctant to increase the marginal rate even by a small amount.

Finally, I have seen the hon. Member's press release which accompanied this amendment. We are looking forward very much to the hon. Member being on the Committee upstairs, but I hope that he will be able to manage something more substantial in his next press release than he has done tonight.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Minister is quite right to raise the attendance of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) at the Finance Committee. The Minister will remember that the hon. Gentleman was a member of the Finance Bill Committee last year and attended only three of the 15 sittings. In fact, his absence from that Committee stage was commented on almost every day of the proceedings.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is quite right in his recollection of those events. There passed through my mind as I surveyed the empty seat of the hon. Member last year that remark of Sir Winston Churchill concerning the Margrave of Baden, who was one of the allies of the first Duke, of whom it was said that his military epitaph for all time should be that the two greatest captains of his age thought his absence from the field as an ally well worth 15,000 men.

I urge my hon. and right hon. Friends to resist this amendment.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and the Paymaster General must be the only two Members in the Committee who did not notice where I went in July last year or how I occupied my time during that month. I am glad to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) discharged an excellent service in that Committee's far smaller number of sittings, during which I fought a certain election.

If that is the only reason that the Government can think of for not allowing a higher level of relief for small business, and the only reason that the Labour party can think of for not supporting it—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the policy review?"] Indeed, perhaps the matter could be brought into the Labour party's policy review. The dearth of serious argument, however, leads me to believe that my hon. Friends should be given the opportunity to invite those who genuinely support small business to come into the Lobby and vote for the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 14, Noes 179.

Division No. 192] **[10.35 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.	Livsey, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	McGrady, Eddie
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Salmond, Alex
Fearn, Ronald	Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Kennedy, Charles	Mr. James Wallace and
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. Matthew Taylor.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan	Bellingham, Henry
Alexander, Richard	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Amess, David	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Amos, Alan	Boscawen, Hon Robert
Arbuthnot, James	Boswell, Tim
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Bottomley, Peter
Batiste, Spencer	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Bowis, John

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

10.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: There is less to clause 33 than meets the eye, and certainly less than the Government have claimed for it. Opposition Members are very understanding people, and we understand that it is a political necessity for the Conservative party to pretend to help small businesses. Of course it is necessary for the Minister and his colleagues to have something to tell their constituency parties. We are not unused to those circumstances. However, it is stretching the facts substantially further than is plausible to say, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget speech:

"but I propose to increase the small companies' rate band substantially, by 50 per cent."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 298.]

Perhaps uniquely on the Opposition Treasury team, I am a fan of the Chancellor's increasingly frequent forays into self-parody and I am sure that that was one example of it.

The truth is that the increase in the profit limit for the rate of small companies' corporation tax and the increase in the marginal relief threshold represent the first adjustment that the Government have made to those thresholds since 1982. It is in that context that the word "substantial" should be considered. If it is right to help small businesses in this way this year, one wonders why it was not right to do so last year, the year before that, and so on, back to 1982. The Government's arguments this year would have had similar force last year. If the measure is necessary to help small businesses, why was it not necessary last year? I ask the Paymaster General why this measure was not brought in last year, or the year before.

It may be helpful to the Committee if I spell out the minimum amount in profits prepaying the higher marginal tax rate that applied from 1974 onwards. The House will see that the amount rose steadily. In 1974 the figure was £25,000; in 1975, it was £30,000; in 1976, £40,000; in 1977, £50,000; in 1978, £60,000; in 1979, £70,000; in 1980, £80,000; in 1981, £90,000; and in 1982, it was £100,000. With equivalent rises in the maximum amount of profits prepaying the highest marginal tax rate, there the levels remained. The figure remained at £100,000 from 1982 until this year's Budget. If the Government claim to be helping small businesses, they need to explain why the figure was frozen for that period.

Mr. Beith: As the hon. Gentleman has criticised the Government for failing for so long to uprate the limit, will he explain why he did not feel able to invite his colleagues to join us in the Lobby in support of a higher threshold or to say during the debate why he was not going to do so?

Mr. Brown: I am addressing my remarks to the clause stand part debate.

Mr. Beith: Feeble.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Gentleman breaks the habit of a lifetime and stays to listen to the debate, he will find out about the Labour party's position, and he will discover that we believe that rates are now about right.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): How does the hon. Gentleman work that out?

Mr. Brown: I shall explain. It is worked out by taking the indexation that applied to the thresholds under the last Labour Government and applying that forward. If that indexation, which we accepted as right, had been applied throughout the period of Conservative Government, the rates would have been £140,000 and £705,000, respectively. That is not so very different from the thresholds that the Government propose. The difference, of course, is that, under a Labour Government, small businesses would have had the advantage of a year-by-year increase.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is there not an additional factor? The Labour Government introduced the stock relief scheme against corporation tax, which had a marked effect on the corporation tax paid by companies.

Mr. Brown: That is correct as well. My contention is that many small businesses would have been advantaged by the regime that pertained when we were in power.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentlemen has just agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that stock relief was an additional advantage. Now that it has gone, does he not think that the indexation that he has just used in a mechanistic and arithmetical way is an inadequate method of evaluating the benefit given? He should have been willing to support a figure higher than the one that he is ready to support.

Mr. Brown: It is self-evident that I do not think that; I have just said so. I think that the approach that I have outlined, which has belatedly been adopted by the Government, is the right one. As Treasury Ministers frequently tell us, and as I shall be telling people one day, I suppose, it is always difficult to strike a balance in these matters. It is not illogical to say that that is how we arrived at the figure.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the answer to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that the stock relief scheme was brought in to deal with the inflation problems that followed the oil price increases in 1974, and that we are not dealing with the same conditions now?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, although I was trying to refrain from discussing the oil crisis and the subsequent inflation, and to stick to the narrower topic of corporation tax relief.

The difference between the Labour party's position and that of the Government on this matter——

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not; the matter has already been given a good airing. No doubt the hon. Gentleman wishes to ask me to repeat what I said five minutes ago. That seems to have been the thrust of most of his interventions, and I will do that if he likes, but I would much rather explain the difference between the Labour party and the Government on this matter. The difference between us is that the Labour party believes that there should have been an annual uprating, whereas the Government chose to freeze the allowances for six years. The Government should address themselves to that, rather than to the more spurious points that the Liberal party is raising.

The Government certainly cannot describe today's increase as substantial. In any event, the savings to small businesses are not as great as the Government are trying to suggest, and in many cases they will certainly not be sufficient to make up for the far more damaging effects of

interest rate rises, which amount to 5·5 per cent. since May 1988. Rising interest rates, rather than the small business corporation tax rate, represent the most significant problem that small businesses face today.

In January this year the Small Business Research Trust stated that the biggest problem facing smaller firms is finance and interest rates. Interestingly enough, the second biggest problem facing small businesses was not corporation tax but skill shortages—again according to the Small Business Research Trust, although the trust did not go on to make the obvious point that skill shortages are caused by Government cuts in funds made available for education and training—indeed, by their failure even to admit that they should be addressing the problem.

At the same time, the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses was drawing our attention to the increasing burdens that were being placed on small businesses by the necessity of having to go to law on issues such as bad debts—surely an unfair burden on businesses and an indication of the real health, or otherwise, of at least part of the economy.

Let me return to the major problem facing the small business community today—interest rates. All of us in the House would like to help our constituents who are running small businesses. Those whom I meet echo the comments of their local trade associations.

Most Members of Parliament will have heard small business men say they are working not for themselves, but for the bank. The banks, of course, make a considerable effort through their television advertising to present themselves as partners in enterprise, but most small businesses find that venture capital can be obtained only in exchange for a first charge on the small business man's family home. In those circumstances, the banks could scarcely claim that the risk has been evenly shared or even that the banks are taking any risk at all.

Government failure to develop an effective venture capital project, particularly for the regions—either through Government agencies or in partnership with private sector financial institutions—is a far greater restraint on the growth of small businesses than any change in corporation tax thresholds.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that the venture capital industry has grown dramatically in recent years and that it is now dealing with a whole range of small companies and providing them with the much-needed equity capital that eases the interest rate problems that many of them face.

Mr. Brown: I am well aware of the activities of private sector venture capital banks and other financial institutions, but they operate very much at the margins. Many small businesses say that they cannot raise venture capital except at usurious rates of interest or by providing some form of security which leaves no risk for the venture capitalist, but leaves a great risk for the business man. In other words, it is an unacceptable risk for the business man. Small businesses need financial investing partners, which are not provided by private sector venture capital schemes. If the private sector takes high risks, it requires high rates of return on its money. It also wants whatever security it can get. It is not enough for the Government to leave it to the private sector. The Government have a duty, either in partnership with the private sector or on their own, to make some sort of scheme available for the small business community.

11 pm

The charge that many small business men level against the banking community is that the banks will only lend money to those who are sufficiently wealthy not to need to borrow. In those circumstances, the recent interest rate rises prove to be an additional and in some cases an insuperable, rather than just a first hurdle for small businesses.

A survey of regional chambers of commerce highlights this point. The overseas trades committee of the Nottinghamshire chamber of commerce concluded in January of this year that it was difficult to reconcile the interest of British exporters with increasing interest rates, and pointed out that foreign companies exist in a quite different regime of interest rates.

The Manchester chamber of commerce reported that 76 per cent. of its members had called for lower interest rates in its last survey. On Teesside the chamber of commerce felt that interest rate rises would make small businesses think twice about their investment decisions over the next six months. The secretary of the Glasgow chamber of commerce pointed out that high interest rates choke off marginal investment for small companies and that the service sector would be forced to load the additional cost on to clients, which could, in turn, mean that those clients would decide to make do with less services.

Those are the views—perfectly rational and understandable—of the authentic voice of the small business community. The Government's endeavours to help small businesses are more cosmetic than real. Their schemes are cheap rather than effective. The National Audit Office told us last autumn, when it looked at the enterprise allowance scheme and the loan guarantee scheme, that 43 per cent. of the enterprise allowance scheme's small businesses failed completely after three years. It found, too, that 42 per cent. of the loans extended under the loan guarantee scheme were the subject of default. The Government's breezy optimism at the launch of the scheme claimed that it was intended to be self-financing. It has, of course, consistently lost money because defaults outweigh the returns on the successful schemes. The Government may very well not care about that.

The reasoning behind the schemes were political and not economic. Boosting enterprise is a necessary political claim in a Conservative party, where there is also a marked reluctance to look at the realities that sit alongside those devices. It is nonsense to assume that every redundant shipyard worker can be converted into a small business man with £40 a week and a one-day induction course. To set 43 per cent. of applicants on the enterprise allowance scheme up for failure after three years is a cruel and unnecessary further blow to inflict on people, many of whom will already have been through the traumas of redundancy. The failure of new small businesses will bring further despair to their owners and their families. They may well also waste the financial compensation received in an earlier redundancy round. There is not much help to small businesses there, and there is no chance for such people to benefit from the enhanced thresholds in the corporation tax review that we are discussing.

[Mr. Brown]

If the Government really intended to help small businesses, they would have listened to the Labour party's Treasury team in the last Parliament, when we sought to amend the regulations covering the collection of VAT.

Many small businesses resent the amount of work that they put into collecting taxes for the Government. When businesses fail, the Inland Revenue and the Customs and Excise are almost always substantial creditors. It was not unreasonable for the Government to tighten up the collection regulations, so that debts to the public purse could not steadily accumulate. What was totally unreasonable and particularly unfair to small businesses was to deny a "good cause" defence to a business man who was in difficulties with VAT returns. Very small businesses will not be the beneficiaries of the corporation tax changes.

The sudden illness of the owner-manager of a small business can be a near-fatal blow to the prospects of the whole enterprise. In those circumstances it is wholly unreasonable for the Customs and Excise to harass the small business man when seeking its VAT payments. Indeed, it may be counter-productive. At a difficult time such pressures may force an otherwise viable business under. Clearly, a public interest defence of good cause could be advanced in those circumstances and I am amazed that a Government who claim to represent the small business community could not see that and legislate for it. It was left to the Labour party to advance such a proposition and the Conservative Government were left to reject it.

Those are the real burdens on small businesses and this measure is the real agenda for small business men. The small business community would like the issues of interest rates and skills shortages to be addressed by the Government in the Finance Bill and elsewhere. The Conservative party will, of course, try to claim credit for the Bill but I conclude, as I opened, by saying that there is substantially less to this than meets the eye.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has just produced some strangely conflicting remarks. At one point he seemed to imply that the Government had conquered the problem of inflation. He sought to argue that the reason that it was not necessary to take into account the disappearance of stock relief, which was a feature of the Labour Government's changes for small businesses, was that that problem was designed to deal with inflation. I must advise the hon. Gentleman that inflation is rising and is now at a serious level. Indeed, that is the plain justification for the Government's interest rate policy. Therefore, the absence of that feature must be one of the factors that one considers when trying to decide whether it would be appropriate to give small companies a higher level of relief than the Government propose.

The hon. Gentleman then argued that the Government had got it about right because if one projects on a year-by-year index basis the position under the Labour Government, one arrives at almost the figure that the Government have proposed. If that is what he thinks, why did he not vote with the Government? It seems perfectly logical to vote with the Government and to support their proposition if one thinks that they have got it right, rather than to skulk in the corner unable to vote either for or against the proposition that the relief should be considerably higher.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East was right to say that the corporation tax relief is a benefit that will not deal with many of the problems of the smallest businesses and that at all levels of small business the problems of the level of interest rates and specifically that of VAT collection loom large. There is clearly a strong case for relieving some of the burden of corporation tax, which is why we support what the Government are doing in default of the larger measure of relief that we have just sought to persuade the Committee to accept.

I trust that having abstained in the previous Division the Labour party will not seek to oppose the inclusion of the clause in the Bill and that we can get on with these other matters when we reach the appropriate point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The amendment that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) moved on behalf of the Social and Liberal Democratic party was not supported by my hon. Friends, for a simple reason—and I shall tell him what was said as we went through the Lobby. It was because we sat through a Bill in Committee last year without Liberal participation in debates on these matters and because, while we voted on such matters, no Liberal Member voted with us that we could not take his amendment seriously.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he can come to the House on such an evening and move an amendment, having issued a press release, in the knowledge that in a previous year his hon. Friends refused to turn up and debate these matters at length, and if he thinks that at the same time, he can gather the credibility of the House of Commons, he is making a grave error of judgment. It may be that he had a very good case: I do not know. We did not consider it. It was not relevant. If he wishes to be taken seriously, he should ensure that his hon. Friends turn up to a Committee on the Finance Bill when we debate these matters again.

I turn briefly to stock relief and its effect on many small businesses during the period of the Labour Government. In many ways that was the largest concession ever given, under corporation tax law, by any Government that I can recall. The intention was to ensure that businesses were compensated for stock increases that arose from the inflation which existed during the period of the Labour Government and which derived from the oil price increases of 1974. However, most accountants, when drawing up accounts on these matters, did not take into account merely inflationary increases in stocks, but stock volumes.

During this period many companies were able to inflate their stock volumes to a major extent and yet, at the same time, claim relief on it. In my view, if the letter of the law had been strictly applied, those companies might have been subject to corporation tax during that period. Due to the complications of annual inventories and the difficulties of assessing the amount of stocks that companies were carrying, it was difficult for company accountants to assess what values could be attributed to inflationary factors, rather than stock volume increases.

Therefore, I submit that this major tax concession, which was introduced by the Labour Government, cost the Exchequer thousands of millions of pounds over that period. If I recall correctly, during that period a number of large companies in this country paid no corporation tax,

while they made healthy profits. They were able to hide behind the arrangements—some might say sloppy arrangements—that operated during the period of stock relief concession. I do not condemn them for that.

Mr. Hanley: It was very important.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It was an important principle. I predict that if the Government do not deal with the problems of the balance of payments, they may find that they have to introduce another stock relief scheme to deal with the inflationary problems that will inevitably arise. We cannot continue as we are at the moment.

Some months ago, I asked the Chancellor a question at Question Time which, if I might say so modestly, was interesting. I asked whether it was fair to say that high penal interest rates were no more than a form of taxation paid to the private sector and private institutions. If a company pays high interest rates to what, in effect, is a private sector bank, it could be said that that is no more than a substitute for what in other conditions, perhaps of lower interest rates, might be a higher level of tax paid to the Exchequer in the form of corporation tax liability.

When we discuss interest rates, particularly as they affect the small business sector, we should remember that we are talking about taxation. Penal interest rates are nothing but taxes paid to private banks. If we see them in that context, the premium that we pay in higher interest rates, rather than more moderate and sensible rates, is a tax imposed by Government—possibly because of the inadequacy of their economic policy—and paid to the private sector and private institutions.

It is unreasonable of the Government not to concede this case. It is their economic policy and strategy that requires them to use interest rates as the weapon, in their view, to reduce the inflation level, and to deal with their other economic problems. In so far as it is a Government-inspired move to drive up interest rates to today's levels, they must take the responsibility, and accept and concede the principle that those high rates are no more than a form of taxation.

When those high interest rates, particularly their impact on small businesses, are taken into account when the lower rate of corporation tax and the raising of the profit limit thresholds are being considered, as they are this evening, the other burdens that have fallen on small businesses over the last few years should also be taken into account.

Another interesting factor that might be deemed a form of taxation is the large increase in commercial property rentals of the past two years. In the part of Lancashire in which I was once in business many years ago, one could regularly buy freehold square footage in the 1970s, for £1·50. The freehold price of a mill in Lancashire was rarely more than 75p a square foot. Today, even in the north, where there is still industrial recession, we pay £2 or £2·50 a square foot, not freehold but rental. Using the rental and the original capital cost multiplier, one can work out that the value of freehold industrial property in recent years has increased twenty to thirtyfold.

11.15 pm

In many ways, this has come about because there is not enough factory space on the market. If the Government built more factory space, through English Industrial Estates or similar organisations, or through local authorities, more commercial property would come on to the market, which would have a knock-on effect on the costs of freehold acquisition and the rental prices of industrial and commercial property. But that is not happening. The scarcity of property is driving up rentals. This inflationary effect on property prices has been induced by the Government, and I submit that that is another form of taxation.

This taxation may be paid to private landlords, but it is a form of taxation because it derives directly from Government policy, which does not provide for the building of sufficient industrial work space. In many parts of the country—certainly in Lancashire and parts of Yorkshire—there is a dearth of industrial and commercial property and rentals are being driven up, even in my constituency. I can remember that, even as late as 1979, square footage in Workington was sold for as little as 50p freehold. Now, people looking for space in west Cumberland will pay £2 or £2·50 a square foot for annual rental—a massive increase.

Another factor to be taken into account in assessing the Government's tax regime for small businesses is the impact of the cuts in regional assistance. Regional support has been dramatically cut, so that in many parts of the country, of which my constituency is an example, a traditional capital-intensive industry such as Thamesboard Mills required such a large amount of Government money to set up its plant in Workington during a big expansion that a special Bill had to be passed to ensure that the company received its regional assistance, which exceeded the levels of grant that Ministers could sanction without such legislation.

We no longer attract this sort of industry. We no longer get the Leyland Nationals, the Ektona Fibres, the Thamesboard Mills and other large capital-intensive industries. They are no longer interested in Workington because we have nothing to offer by way of substantial regional assistance.

We are still an assisted area and we have development area status, but the level of assistance is substantially less than it used to be, and we are competing with other parts of the United Kingdom which have equally high levels of unemployment. In those areas are pools of unemployed and they are nearer to the great conurbations and market centres. In many ways they are winning against us in our bid to attract capital intensive industries.

The burden on small businesses in my constituency, including the cuts in regional assistance and the fact that they are paying higher interest rates and higher rentals for their properties, puts them at a considerable disadvantage. So the concessions on corporation tax which the Government have announced today for small businesses are small compared with the added burdens that those businesses have acquired in recent years.

Other cuts have applied to small businesses that would like to get into export markets to achieve growth, finding that they are hemmed in by saturation of the domestic market. Many small businesses used to use the British Overseas Trade Board as the vehicle for getting into foreign markets. I refer to businesses with perhaps half a dozen or a dozen employees, the very companies that are today in potentially expanding sectors. They have been clobbered, in effect, by the new rules under which the BOTB does not sponsor, in the way it did in the past, the small firms of which I speak.

I was sent to Tokyo, Japan, in 1973 on a trade exhibition, paid for by the Department of Trade, where we secured a number of new accounts for the manufacturers

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

with which I was involved. I also attended on a number of occasions the Milan trade exhibition and other such gatherings in various parts of Europe, always sponsored by the BOTB or by sectional bodies within the industry which, in turn, were sponsore on group stands. I am told that much of that has ended. I attended an exhibition in Birmingham a couple of months ago to talk to people in the trade that I was in originally, and they told me that the level of support now for people in our markets is minimal.

Mr. Hanley: If what the hon. Gentleman is saying is true, can he explain why more companies are now registered at Companies house than at any time in our history, allowing for the number of companies that have come off the register?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That may not be too correct a measure; we may be talking of small incorporated businesses involving two or three people who, for whatever reason, have been advised by their accountants to seek incorporation. What matters is how much wealth we produce, how many people are employed, how secure one's markets are at home, whether one will be wiped by the cool breeze of recession and whether one can get into export markets.

Let us remember that export markets are a great plus for industry generally and certainly for smaller businesses. Such markets for small businesses often produce large orders. People who go abroad to sell do not want small orders; they want to do substantial business. Often in the 1970s I came across small business men whose major markets on the continent were store and wholesale groups and so on. It seems that much of that has gone because the contact point—the BOTB-sponsored exhibition—has, in effect, been lost from the support point of view, and many of those people no longer exhibit in overseas markets. That type of cost must be taken into account for businesses that want to enter those markets, and that cost must come into our evaluation of the real value of this concession for small businesses.

Historically, the tourist industry has been well supported by Government. We now learn that the Government have placed a moratorium on payments under one of the sections dealing with grants under tourist legislation with the effect that many projects are being put in jeopardy. Those that are will have their profitability affected by the loss of that grant. When we evaluate the worth of a concession in corporation tax, we cannot take it in isolation. We must see it in the context of all those factors and many others that I have not mentioned this evening.

My final point concerns the exchange rate and its effect on small businesses. I remember going to a trade exhibition in New York in 1980 to see some colleagues whom I had known when I was in business in the 1970s. We discussed the impact of the rise in sterling against the dollar on our ability to export to our overseas markets. One thing that rang out clearly throughout our conversations was that a high exchange rate was damaging Britain's exports.

Following that meeting, I met people from many companies which were severely damaged by the high exchange rate in 1980, 1981 and 1982 when sterling was so valuable. I am sure that I am not alone in that experience. I am sure that if hon. Members are truthful, they will remember that period well. We lost markets then, and now the exchange rate is over-valued. Until a decision is taken to reduce the exchange rate and come down to something like $1·40 to the pound, the trade deficit will not be closed. A convoluted argument was produced last year that a high exchange rate could lead to a reduction in the trade deficit, but I never subscribed to that view, although it was interesting. I think that the Government have changed their position on that.

It is critical to close that trade deficit because that will provide the basis on which a real spark and some fire can be given to small business development in Britain. We need a way of ensuring that British manufacturers substitute for foreign imports. The only way that we can do that is by giving them some sort of competitive edge. That drop of 25 or 30 cents in the exchange rate will be critical in helping many companies to import substitute. That is what we have to do.

When the Paymaster General discusses those matters with his colleagues in the Treasury, he must realise that he cannot go on like this, when he has at his fingertips a weapon that he can use which within months, or certainly within a few years, could have an immeasurable effect on the opportunities and potential for small businesses.

Mr. Brooke: This has been an interesting and valuable debate, opened by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) who began his speech by saying that the clause less than met the eye and concluded his speech with the same words. He also passed judgment on my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's use of the word "substantially". It was an agreeable metaphysical passage in his speech. The most metaphysical of all economic phenomena are invisible earnings.

This is a debate about small companies which have been highly visible. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) said that for the past eight years, and particularly for the past two or three years, there has been a notable and rapid expansion in the number of small companies that have entered business.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East confirmed in his speech what I said in my speech on the amendment No. 14 and I shall now confirm that he was right. As the Bellman said in "The Hunting of the Snark", "What I tell you three times is true".

The hon. Gentleman asked why the Government had not changed these bands earlier. The reason was, as I said in my speech on the earlier amendment, that during the period to which he was referring we had been engaged in bringing the rate down. We brought the small companies rate down from 42 per cent. to 25 per cent. between 1979 and 1988.

The hon. Gentleman said that so far as the Labour party was concerned the rates were now about right. I think he probably meant the bands. We follow with the keenest interest anything that the Labour party says about rates because we notice a certain reticence about indicating precisely at what level various rates will strike. I am greatly reassured to hear that the hon. Gentleman thinks in this instance that the rates are about right.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I referred to the rates at which the bands are set.

11.30 pm

Mr. Brooke: At any rate, I have sought to give the hon. Gentleman a response to what he said.

He went on to talk about interest rates and the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) also addressed that subject. We all come here with the various impedimenta of our experience. I always enjoy listening to the hon. Member for Workington—and I hope he will forgive me for saying so—talking about his experience in the private sector before he entered the House. I ran a business for 18 years before coming into the House and I think that those of us who run businesses of the sort of size that I did and, I suspect, the hon. Gentleman did are accustomed to aspects of the business cycle and to living through them. I certainly can remember living through the difficulties of the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. I would have lived through the difficulties of the recession of 1969-71 if I had not been in New York, where the *Wall Street Journal* somewhat surprised me by being sufficiently frivolous as to say that the recession had become so serious that the Mafia had had to lay off two judges in New Jersey.

The important thing for anybody running a small business is a sense of steadiness in the economic framework within which he is asked to operate, and that is something which the Government have sought to provide.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): May I ask the right hon. Gentleman one simple question? How does he justify a stituation in which interest rates are virtually double the rate of inflation?

Mr. Brooke: I think the hon. Gentleman is familiar with the relationship between the mortgage interest rate and the RPI in this country, which only applies elsewhere in Ireland and Canada.

Mr. Rowlands: That was not my question.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman asked me about the inflation rate and I was saying that, since the interest rate and the mortgage interest rate, which flows from it, are part of the RPI, necessarily when inflation is rising it provides an upward stimulus and when it is falling it provides a very strong downward stimulus.

Mr. Rowlands: I did not say anything about the mortgage rate. I asked a simple question. Why should interest rates be nearly double the rate of inflation?

Mr. Brooke: I genuinely misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's question. I think he is taking us slightly wide of the clause; I shall watch you, Sir Paul, out of the corner of my eye. If the hon. Gentleman will refer to a table in a relatively recent copy of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* he will see the real interest rates in the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany and their relationship to the movements in wages and unit labour costs. The real rate of interest in this country being an offset to the fact that unit labour costs have been rising faster, one sees from the chart a rate which is comparable in the three places.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the real reason the fact that the Chancellor wants all this hot money in London to pay for the trade deficit? Why does not the right hon. Gentleman be honest with the House?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. This debate is now getting rather wide. We must stick to the clause which we are discussing.

Mr. Brooke: In the spirit of the question which the hon. Member for Workington asked, he knows that, because the balancing item is now larger than the deficit, it is difficult to know whether it is British exports which are being understated and what precisely is the nature of the capital inflow. I agree that we would be able to have a more interesting debate if we had precision on those figures.

The hon. Member for Workington made reference to stock relief and went through an analysis in relation to inflation. I will not go into a discussion with him as to what caused inflation during that period but I can echo some of the things that he said about stock relief. In the 1980s, that provision became much less important as we reduced the rate of inflation, and it was abolished in 1984 as part of a package of measures enabling the rate of corporation tax to be reduced. Both the main and small companies rates are much lower than when we came to office.

The hon. Gentleman referred to rentals for industrial space in his part of the country. I am delighted that on the basis of his analysis the demand for industrial space to which he also referred seems likely to increase the amount of space available. There was the slightest constituency dimension to the hon. Gentleman's speech, and, as to his comments on development areas, it is the case that, in the first 10 days after I was born my father anonymously contributed three articles to *The Times* on the subject of County Durham that all the historians of the 1930s say were responsible for the creation of development areas. My father is now dead, and although he was sympathetic and a stimulus to the concept of development areas in the 1930s, I am certain that he would be delighted that the manner in which the market is operating is causing the enterprise culture to flourish in all parts of the country.

The hon. Gentleman's concluding remarks concerned the exchange rate. I was the financial correspondent for the *Financial Times* in Switzerland at a time when there were 12 deutschmarks to the pound and 12 Swiss francs to the pound. The remarkable achievement of Switzerland and Germany has been to run balance of payments surpluses over the ensuing nearly 30 years while enjoying a steady increase in the value of their currencies. In the early 1980s —the very period to which the hon. Gentleman referred —there was a swing of 2·8 per cent. in terms of Japan's trade position as a percentage of gross domestic product at a time when it had an appreciating currency.

In the first quarter of this year, export volumes increased by 6·5 per cent. by comparison with the last quarter of 1988, at a time when import volumes increased by only 3·5 per cent. That is clear evidence that the reduction in demand for imports is improving our trading position.

We have strayed some way from the terms of clause 33. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East sought to suggest that there was less to clause 33 than meets the eye. I am certain that the small business men, seeing that the bands have changed, will regard it as a very worthwhile clause, and I commend it to the Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 32

CHARGE AND RATE OF CORPORATION TAX FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1989

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Rowlands: If we accept clause 32, we shall be accepting a uniform corporate rate for all companies. I take this opportunity to debate the situation affecting not the smaller firms that were the subject of clause 33 but mature manufacturing sector companies of medium to large size.

I wonder whether the Government have noticed what is beginning to happen among such companies, particularly those in the consumer durable and white goods sectors, which still account for a significant number of jobs and for an important part of the country's ecomomy. I therefore question whether we should automatically endorse rates of 35 per cent. for all companies, irrespective of their current situation.

I represent a community in which the only manufacturing base we have left is what I call the mature manufacturing sector, which is in consumer durables, selling to a replacement market rather than one for innovative products. They are seeking to encourage consumers to replace washing machines and so on—the consumer durable white goods. As a result of this they are finding increasing difficulty in making such sales.

One of the major problems has been the increase in interest rates, which has led to a reduction in consumer power and therefore an increasing problem of growing stocks in this manufacturing sector. I raise this because I have a horrible feeling that we are about to enter another phase in which, for the Chancellor's policy to work, a number of our people will be put out of work. We went through it in the early eighties, and we were told we were over it by the Government, but now again we are seeing the terrible tell-tale signs. As a result of high interest rates and the dampening down of consumption, which I understand is the Government's case for high interest rates, the biggest impact will be not upon the imported manufacturing sector but on the domestic mature manufacturing sector. Sales in a whole area of our existing manufacturing sector will be affected by high interest rates.

The Treasury never understands what happens to the economy. It runs this system, but never looks closely at what happens in micro terms as a result of general, broad economic policy and use of fiscal instruments. For example, high interest rates are a blunt instrument which affects everybody and everything. In the communities I represent, in the industries I know most about because my constituents are still employed in them, stocks are rising, sales are falling and we are beginning to worry about whether we shall have redundancies once again in this sector.

I do not know what the answer is. Should there be a differential rate of interest for the manufacturing sector? Apparently not. So I raise the question whether there should be a differential rate of corporation tax. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) put down an amendment, which was not accepted for an understandable reason, to introduce such a differential. I ask the Minister whether he is happy with the fact that in this mature manufacturing sector there will be problems with employment. Will we go through a new phase of redundancies? Will we yet again find ourselves being put out of work? On the other hand, does he think the economy will grow and we can see ourselves through this?

I am not happy, and I therefore seek the opportunity on this clause to arouse the interest of the Government in this problem. Please will the Minister tell me whether he believes that as a result of high interest rates we shall be out of work, as we were in the early eighties?

11.45 pm

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to respond to the hon. Gentleman the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). At the risk of extending my family references, my grandfather grew up in Rhymney as the son of the secretary of the iron works, and I am delighted to have this link with the hon. Member. He addressed the set-off between inflation and interest rates, and posed various questions about what the future might hold for us and probed whether the Government understood what was happening. Of course the Government understand the effect of a period of high interest rates on the economy and the level of demand, and the impact of that on manufacturers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Without question, however, we regard inflation as a much more serious problem and one that must be defeated and cured. A period of high interest rates is, in our view, a sensible instrument to use to achieve that objective.

Since 1979—I am now addressing myself to the hon. Gentleman's query on behalf of his right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about whether there should be a differential rate of corporation tax for the manufacturing side—there has been a major turnaround in the fortunes of manufacturing industries, which are now in a far stronger position than they have been for many years. Output has reached record levels. In 1988 alone it grew by 7 per cent., and the latest figures show that that growth is continuing. In the three months to February, output was 7·5 per cent. higher than it was in the same period last year. The pattern has been observable over a significant period; over the past two years annual growth has consistently exceeded 5 per cent. We have not experienced such developments for a long time.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister has drawn from his historic and family experience of our communities. May I bring him up to date? The area that I represent—along with other parts of the Principality and the rest of the country—has experienced threatened redundancies, shorter working weeks and rising stocks in consumer durables. Will the Minister answer a simple question? Dos he believe that for the Chancellor's policy to work more of our people must be put out of work?

Mr. Brooke: It is certainly not my right hon. Friend's purpose that people should be put out of work; it is his purpose, however, that the level of demand in the economy should be somewhat reduced to achieve the beneficial effect on inflation that we seek. The hon. Gentleman cannot press me to make a specific forecast about what will happen in Merthyr Tydfil, which—in a pluralist system—will, by definition, depend on the companies involved. But there is no doubt that, first, manufacturing industry has been doing extremely well in the recent past, and, secondly, the Government see no reason for the differential rate of tax that the hon. Gentleman seemed, by implication, partly to suggest.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister winds his words around. I do not ask him to make a forecast; I simply ask him to confirm or deny that the potential consequence of high interest rates in a mature manufacturing sector is more people out of work. The Minister says that he wants to dampen down consumption; one of the effects of that is increased unemployment. Does he agree with that proposition?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is talking about a highly complex interlocking set of equations.

Mr. Rowlands: Those are just words.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman can say that they are only words, but the fact remains that what happens to wage rates in such circumstances directly affects what will happen in his constituency. I would find it difficult to make such a forecast.

What the Chancellor is seeking to do is bring the economy back to a state of equilibrium in which there is no excess demand, inflation can be wrung out of the economy and we can revert to the steady growth that the country has seen over the past seven or eight years—growth that it has rarely known before in its history.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 33 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

To report progress and ask leave to sit again.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

Rose Theatre, Southwark

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

11.49 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It was a great pleasure to hear on Thursday last that Mr. Speaker had selected for this evening the opportunity for me to raise the matter of the preservation of the Rose theatre in Southwark. I am very grateful to him for that.

When one is but the latest of a series of Members of Parliament for a constituency, the first of whom took his seat in 1295, one can reflect without too much need for research on some words appropriate for tonight:

> "All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits, and their entrances".

We are here but briefly as politicians. The unusual privilege of being a politician normally allows one to make specific pleas for one's constituents; it rarely allows one to make pleas that also go far beyond the interests of one's constituents on a matter of national and international importance, or to make pleas for something of enormous historical importance. But that is what I can do this evening.

I want to do two simple things. First, on behalf of my constituents and many others in this country and beyond, I come to Parliament, to the centre of the modern, national political stage, to make a plea that the recently discovered ruins of the Rose theatre in Southwark be preserved from today henceforth for all the world to enjoy.

I come with a second plea specifically for the Government. I seek nothing more and nothing less than a simple declaration that the Government be willing to say today or, at the latest, later this week, that they are of the view that the Rose theatre should be preserved for all to see and that they will work actively to secure that.

It may sometimes be thought that modern constituents in an inner-city working community do not think that ruins are of great importance. In fact, our local newspaper last year did a vox pop and discovered exactly the opposite. The people of Southwark and Bermondsey said that they overwhelmingly supported the preservation of our history and our heritage.

The Minister will know that it was less than a year ago that I raised with her predecessor in the House the question of the archaeological heritage of Southwark, an enormously rich area of archaeological interest because of its ancient geographical importance, being at the crossing point into London from the continent and elsewhere. More recently, on 21 February this year, my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) asked the Secretary of State

"what representations he has received from English Heritage concerning the archaeological discovery of the Elizabethan Rose theatre in Southwark."

The Minister replied:

"None so far."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. *572.*]

I know for a fact that since then letters have been pouring into her Department with increasing rapidity and authority.

Things have moved on, because the excavation of the Rose theatre has revealed that we have discovered a treasure indeed. Over the last few weeks, it has become clear that the ruins of one of the great Elizabethan theatres

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

of Bankside—one directly linked with Shakespeare and lost to sight over 350 years ago—can now be seen and enjoyed at Bankside, by the Thames by Southwark bridge.

But next week, the foundations of the theatre are likely to be covered up and damaged substantially. They were discovered on land belonging to Imry Merchant Developers. I can say without equivocation that to date Imry, the landowner, has acted with absolute propriety and worked with English Heritage and the Museum of London to secure an opportunity for archaeologists to explore the theatre and to reveal the treasure that exists. I am grateful to the company, as I have said to the director in charge of the site, and I here repeat my thanks. But now we must go further. If the site is covered up at the beginning of next week, we shall lose a site of unique importance and an opportunity for all time.

The site is one of only eight theatres in London in the 16th century, four of which were on the south bank. The sites of the Hope and the Swan are likely to have been destroyed by commercial office developments. The site of the Globe has not been excavated and we do not know what, if anything, we shall find. We have excavated the site of the Rose as we have found it. Therefore we have found the first, and as far as we can be sure the only, in situ evidence of one of the Elizabethan theatres. No one knows whether we shall find any more, but we have found the site of the Rose; it is unique and it may be all we possess of the physical structure of the great public theatres of London 400 years ago. Those theatres were unique to London from the mid-17th century.

The Rose was built in 1587 by Philip Henslow, the impresario, and his partner, Edward Alleyn. It is the earliest of the four Shakespearean theatres. It saw Marlowe's plays performed—it saw "Dr. Faustus" and "The Jew of Malta"—and Jonson, Dekker, Webster and Shakespeare himself performed there too. "Henry VI" and "Titus Andronicus" were probably performed by Shakespeare himself on the stage that we can see now. I found it timely indeed that last Saturday I enjoyed a performance of "Henry VI" by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican, only a mile away from the original venue of that play. The last known performance at the Rose was in 1603. Soon afterwards, the theatre was demolished and covered up, although happily this theatre is one of the theatres where we know all that was put on and the only one of which we have an illustration contemporay to Shakespeare's plays.

As a result of the dig, we have discovered an enormous amount about the Elizabethan theatre that we did not know but had only speculated about. Previous evidence was contradictory We had to hypothesise as to what the theatre looked like and how it worked. Now we can see it for ourselves. Today in *The Times* there is an illustration by C. Walter Hodges of what the Rose must have looked like, based on the now available information. It shows the polygonal inner and outer walls of the galleries, the sloping mortar floor, the foundation of the stage and the towered tiring house behind. The heritage of Southwark, England and the world has now accurately been discovered on Bankside not far from here.

I have received many letters and expressions of interest in recent days. One letter from a student at King's college, London, asks:

> "Is not the site of the Rose theatre on a par with that of the Tower of Westminster Abbey? Many foreign visitors surely find their strongest association with England through her great writers and few sights could hold more attractive power than one associated with Shakespeare. Thousands go to Stratford".

On Bankside we have the real thing. This week we have the opportunity to decide how we make sure that the excitement which I, like others, have enjoyed, is shared by people in years to come.

Another letter to me said:

> "The discovery of the Rose theatre in Southwark provides one of the most important pieces of hard evidence on the nature of the Elizabethan theatre ever to have been found. Although it lies in the earth and rises but a few feet, it is a national monument to rank with Stonehenge."

On many occasions—by letter, parliamentary question and Adjournment debate—I have asked the Secretary of State to schedule the Rose and Globe theatres. I am aware of the procedure for scheduling and for designating areas as areas of archaeological importance. I first ask therefore that a decision be made this week to schedule the site of the Rose theatre and to designate north Southwark, contemplated as a possible area for such designation, as a sixth AAI. I hope that the Government will say that they are willing to consider that and I have today tabled a question to the Secretary of State asking specifically about scheduling.

I want to go further and to explore the ways forward, in the belief that they can be achieved. Given that the developers have so far been sympathetic and given that they now realise how amazing the discovery is, a breathing space is needed for them, the planners in Southwark and English Heritage, with Government support, to work out a way whereby the building that the developers want can be built in a modified form and yet the Rose can be preserved.

On an adjacent site, the actor, director and great friend of Shakespeare, Sam Wanamaker, is constructing a replica of the Globe. It would be a supreme dramatic irony if an American were to be recreating a model of our heritage while we were burying the original Rose theatre itself next door. We cannot allow that to happen.

The remains of the Rose should and must be preserved and presented for the public to view as a monument capable of interpretation. Given the will, the time, the money and the imagination, it must be possible to find a way of keeping the remains visible to future generations. All options should be considered, but the important precondition is that the site is not filled in and that piles are not driven through the foundations, as proposed for next week.

Reconstruction of the site elsewhere is not an option. That would not be authentic. Relocation is not an option, because it would not be the same as the original site. Covering the theatre up and opening it up again later is not an option, because even that would have risks to the site and some of the remains would be destroyed. The vibration of vehicles, the weight of vehicles and power-driving machines would cause additional destruction, apart from the immediate destruction caused by building work. However careful people are, covering in and opening up the remains would not be good enough.

Sam Wanamaker's proposal—although in the right direction—that the site could be viewed only through glass —whether light or darkly—is not sufficient. The Colosseum in Rome is enjoyable because one is in the

place. Stonehenge is right and important because it is as it was. Fishbourne is right because one can go in and walk around. We must be able to do the same with the Rose.

Many people have written to me expressing their support. John Earl, the director of the Theatres Trust, a body set up by Parliament to promote the better protection of theatres, says:

"It is of vital importance that the preservation and proper display of the Rose should be achieved to the highest international standards".

He goes on to comment that linking it to a possible development next door is not secure enough. The archaeologists on site make it clear that it must be preserved in a way that can be appreciated. It would be ludicrous for us to seek to achieve a lesser objective.

My colleague the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) wanted to be here tonight and expressly sends support, as does my colleague the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). Three parties are represented in the Southwark borough's three Members of Parliament and they are supported by the local authority, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Southwark, the Bishop of Southwark and many from the theatre world —performers, managers, historians and many besides.

Many messages have come in from Britain and overseas. The most pre-eminent people in British theatre today feel that the Rose is so important that not only do they visit it; they want to make it clear that it must be preserved. I hope that I am not exaggerating when I say that the importance of the preservation of the Rose cannot be overestimated. It is a miracle that it has been found, and it must now be kept to be enjoyed.

The Secretary of State and, I understand, the Prime Minister have now been alerted to the importance of the site. I hope that the Minister will tell us tonight that the Government are willing to say that the work done so far is good but that, now we have discovered the treasure under the earth, we must ensure that it is preserved.

It is no good saying, "It is just another site and we cannot preserve them all." I was not here last Friday for the Adjournment debate about the Huggin hill palace in the City of London, although I have read the report of it in *Hansard*. The Minister made it clear that there were other Roman baths and that we might have to lose one. We cannot say that about the Rose. There is no other example of this part of our heritage in the country. It is unique, and must be recognised as such.

I shall end by quoting from others who have written in support of the case before us, but first let me sound a note of warning. It is not enough that we should continue to react at the last moment to each important find or to try at the eleventh hour to intervene in negotiations that have cliffhanger qualities. We should reform our planning structures so that, in future, we can protect sites in advance.

The Minister knows that this is not a one-off expression of interest on my part. I hope that she will see my bid tonight as part of my concern that we should not only increase the number of ancient monuments that we schedule and protect, increase the number of areas of archaeological importance that we designate and the financial wherewithal given for the work to be done, but we should ensure that local authorities protect archaeology and structure plans, that the Department's structure plan is made much more specific in its guidance and that the environmental impact assessment measure agreed last year are specifically made to apply to the buried historic environment. We must do more, or we shall lose other sites, as valuable as the Rose but in different ways.

The conclusions of those who have visited the Rose are that we are confronted by our first sight of a playhouse that Shakespeare knew. My last quotation is from someone who wrote to me:

"It is all we have ever seen of the most important group of theatres in the history of Western civilisation and our first glimpse of the place where English drama reached its finest flowering. If we do not keep it the world will rightly judge us to be barbaric."

We have an historic responsibility and I hope that, in partnership with all concerned, we shall discharge it this week with honour.

12.8 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The hon. Gentleman said that this was not a one-off interest for him. I endorse that remark. He has raised questions of archaeological concern, particularly relating to his constituency, on several occasions—in questions, in letters and in the debate to which he referred, which took place shortly before I took over my present responsibilities.

I have much sympathy with the hon. Gentleman because I spent many years as a social worker in his part of Southwark. It is well known that helping people to have a sense of pride in the history of their community can play a very important part. I worked on the north Peckham estate, which is an estate where a sense of identity and an understanding of the past cannot be said to be the overriding preoccupation of its residents, so I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's wish for people to know and to understand the past of Southwark and to find ways to ensure that archaeological remains can be preserved and shared with others.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the debate last Friday which concerned the impressive archaeological remains at Huggin hill in the City. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me another opportunity to discuss archaeology. I have been waiting for some months in my present role for such matters to be discussed on the Floor of the House because they are of growing interest and concern. As development grows and as the whole profession of archaeology strengthens, new techniques and new ways of understanding become available. At the museum of London, which played an important part at the Rose theatre, there are no fewer than 400 archaeologists over the year who participate in digs in London.

The remains at Huggin hill, ascribed by some as those of the palace of Julius Agricola, the governor of Britain —although there is some argument about that—are indeed impressive. I can inform the hon. Gentleman that we are keeping in close contact with all the parties there, and we are continuing to press for a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

Equally exciting are the discoveries to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. Those excavations have been established to the satisfaction both of the museum of London and of the scholars of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre as the site of the Rose theatre, which, as the hon. Gentleman said, in its heyday saw performances of most of Christopher Marlowe's plays, with Edward

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

Alleyn—that famous actor of his day and later founder of Dulwich college—playing the title role of Dr. Faustus and the Jew of Malta.

Perhaps of even greater excitement, certainly for Shakespeare scholars and enthusiasts all over the world, will be the fact that two of Shakespeare's early plays received their first performance there—Henry VI in 1592, in which some believe—the hon. Gentleman would count himself among them—Shakespeare appeared as a young actor, and also Titus Andronicus. For the first time we have clear evidence of the shape, size and layout of an Elizabethan theatre, which is crucial to the understanding of the production of the Elizabethan plays that have given so much to our culteral heritage of drama and theatre.

The excitement of this discovery—and for some the surprise—has led to an understandable wish for its preservation, especially because, as we know, such remains are irreplaceable. There are real practical and philosophical debates about the best way forward. How do we safeguard the best of our heritage in a manner consistent with the needs of a dynamic society? How do we also move towards the future? Some of those issues were discussed in our debate last week. I made it clear to the House then that we have seen very dramatic improvements in the relationship between developers and archaeologists.

In a controversial case in York concerning the palace of the Emperor Septimus Severus, there was speculation about how that could be preserved. As a result of good will and co-operation between the archaeologists and the developers, the developers have agreed to redesign the foundations to preserve the archaeology.

Much of that good will and co-operation stems directly from a very valuable code of practice produced by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers and the British Property Federation. That partnership has resulted not only in co-operation, but in hard resources. While English Heritage has recently estimated that last year it made a contribution of about £7 million to archaeology, a further £14 million was contributed by developers for excavation. That reinforces the view that voluntary co-operation and partnership are working well in many cases.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the Rose theatre is not a scheduled ancient monument. Many will feel it essential for the protection of those remains, that they be scheduled. Indeed, only last week we received a request to this effect from the museum of London. Scheduling means that consent must be sought from the Secretary of State before any works that would disturb the monument may be carried out. However, it does not automatically mean that the site must be preserved for all time.

In considering the merits of any scheduling proposal, such as that put forward, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that planning permission for the redevelopment of the site has previously been granted by the London borough of Southwark and that construction is indeed under way on another part of the site which is separate from the remains of the Rose theatre. It must also be appreciated that adequate time for excavation of the site has already been negotiated between the museum of London and the developers, Imry Merchant Developers plc.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman pay tribute to the developers because I understand that the work has been carried out throughout in accordance with an agreement drawn up and fully adhered to by both sides. I know too that English Heritage, our agent in this area, has been keeping an informal watching brief on the site and that Imry Merchant has consistently respected its requirements. I have no hesitation in commending the developer's allocation of time, funds and equipment, which resulted in this dramatic discovery in the first place and which has allowed for the subsequent excavation of the site.

I am conscious also that Imry Merchant Developers plc is currently studying seriously the imaginative concept which hon. Members may have seen referred to in newspaper articles recently. The hon. Gentleman referred to Sam Wanamaker's idea for a below-ground Shakespeare museum, which would be linked by tunnel to the Rose site, emerging in an area from which the Rose remains could be viewed, at some time in the future.

I understand that Imry has evaluated this general concept so far as has been possible in the short time available, and that it is prepared to do whatever can be done in conformity with its general aims and objectives. It has indicated that the existing scheme could be modified so that it is compatible with such a scheme as has been put forward by Sam Wanamaker. This would involve the encapsulation of the site, and the covering of the remains, so that the filling could be dug out again at a later date and the remains seen from a viewing platform. I understand that this may not be sufficient to satisfy the hon. Gentleman, but it has been endorsed by English Heritage.

I stress that is remains to be seen whether it will prove possible to put the plan into effect. I am, however, encouraged that Imry is living up to its track record for responsible reaction to new situations. Its actions once again prove how seriously so many developers rightly take their responsibilities towards the archaeological heritage. However, I stress that, regardless of whether the Sam Wanamaker scheme comes to fruition, the remains of the Rose theatre site will be preserved for future generations beneath the new development.

In terms of extending our knowledge of Elizabethan theatre, the Rose project has already been a remarkable success. The information gathered from the excavations has amply demonstrated that. The remains will be substantially preserved beneath the new building. Although we can do nothing to mitigate the damage that has already been done by the piling from previous office blocks, any further damage to be caused by the new building is minimal.

That brings me to the question of designation under part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. We have discussed that matter previously. As I have said, English Heritage has recently consulted local authorities and a number of other bodies about the working of the system and about whether further designation would be desirable. We have received its advice and are considering it carefully and I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's remarks in that context.

I should like to congratulate the developers and the archaeologists on their splendid job. Like the hon. Gentleman, I hope that a way will be found to ensure that future generations are able to see this magnificent discovery and I commit myself to working with all the parties to find an effective outcome that will achieve the goal that we are all pursuing.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 10 May 1989

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SCRABSTER HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nicaragua

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit of the President of Nicaragua.

14. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of Nicaragua; and what subjects were discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): President Ortega visited the United Kingdom from 6 to 8 May in the course of an extensive European tour. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met him on 8 May. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I saw Foreign Minister d'Escoto on the same day.

Mr. Banks: May I through you, Mr. Speaker, thank all hon. Members for the warm and courteous welcome they gave President Ortega on Monday, which was in stark contrast to the ill-advised, offensive, abusive and graceless way in which the Prime Minister treated him? As she always speaks on Nicaragua from a position of profound ignorance, will she be accepting the invitation extended by President Ortega to send a Government delegation to Nicaragua to study the situation there prior to next year's election?

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear during the President's visit that our attitude to Nicaragua will continue to be based on our assessment of its moves to genuine democracy, its determination to remove foreign advisers, its determination or otherwise to reduce its armed forces and its determination to stop the destabilisation of neighbouring countries. Those are exactly the four criteria by which we made it clear that we would judge Nicaragua when my right hon. and learned Friend met its vice-president over three years ago.

Mr. Loyden: Instead of using language that has been used by Foreign Office Ministers since time immemorial and criticising its Government without understanding what is going on, why does not the Minister think more positively and send a delegation to Nicaragua to see developments at first hand?

Mr. Eggar: We have an excellent embassy and chargé d'affaires who regularly report what is happening in Nicaragua. The hon. Gentleman appears to be unaware that all Nicaraguan opposition parties from the far Left to the far Right have condemned the changes to the electoral law that were introduced by the Sandinistas on 5 May, of which President Ortega appears to be unaware.

Mr. Ashby: As someone who is not profoundly ignorant of Nicaragua and has seen its steady deterioration over the past four years as a result of the nature of its Government, will my hon. Friend welcome steps towards further elections and explain to President Ortega some of the prerequisites for fair and free elections? It is no good having an Sandinistan army or police force, and it is no good local committees run by Sandinistas distributing food to everyone, expecting them to believe that there will be fair and free elections.

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend, who echoes the points made by President Arias of Costa Rica, among others. The present Nicaraguan constitution ensures that the armed forces and apparatus of the state owe allegiance not to the country but to the Sandinista party.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an interesting contrast between the attitude of the Opposition in this House, who seem to regard Nicaragua as a gentle democracy, and the fact that in Nicaragua, the Sandinista Government do not allow the Opposition free and fair access to the media?

Mr. Eggar: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. The Sandinista party controls all the television stations.

Mr. Foulkes: Why do not the Government for once use their undoubted influence with the United States in a positive way and persuade the United States to use the money that it is planning to give to terrorists to resettle people in Nicaragua for the free and fair elections to be held in February 1990? Why are our Government the only Government in Europe not attending the Stockholm conference on aid to Nicaragua, which is beleaguered by war and the recent hurricane? Why will the Minister not consider visiting Nicaragua to find out the truth about it, instead of hearing the ignorance displayed by the Prime Minister at her meeting with Daniel Ortega?

Mr. Eggar: We are not attending the Stockholm conference because we believe that the economic collapse which is a feature of Nicaragua at present was brought about by the Sandinista regime and we see no reason to provide additional aid. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have provided humanitarian aid to assist with the effects of the hurricane. We support, of course, the new bipartisan policy of the United States.

President Bush

4. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of his recent meeting with President Bush.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): When I met President Bush in

Washington on 17 April, we discussed a number of current issues including East-West relations, short-range nuclear forces, the middle east, Lebanon, southern Africa and Latin America.

Mr. Couchman: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. In the course of his wide-ranging discussions, did he have an opportunity to discuss the initiative by President Bush in seeking to control narcotics, especially in relation to south American countries, and did he discuss the possibilities of further co-operative action between our two countries on this serious problem?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We certainly welcome the initiative of President Bush to which my hon. Friend refers. As he knows, it is an accepted part of our common policy for co-operation that we are engaged in a partnership in the worldwide war against drugs, with particular reference to Latin America. The first agreement, which I signed myself, for bilateral co-operation for the tracing, freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of drug transactions, was signed with the United States and came into force last night.

Mr. Denzil Davies: During the discussions on short-range and battlefield nuclear weapons, did the Foreign Secretary explain the British Government's policy? Is it the British Government's view that short-range and battlefield nuclear weapons are necessary to counter Soviet conventional superiority and would they still be necessary if there were parity of conventional forces?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is the view of the whole Alliance that we need to maintain short-range nuclear weapons, among others, in a capable and up-to-date condition. The Alliance agrees in rejecting a third zero and that remains the position in all circumstances.

Sir Peter Blaker: Can my right hon. and learned Friend say whether President Bush shares the view that there is one question in East-West relations that is even more important than disarmament—whether the Soviet Union has abandoned its desire to expand at the expense of other countries and to dominate them? Does he agree that that has not yet been established?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The President of the United States and his Administration, together with the other members of the NATO Alliance, share the view that it is necessary for the Alliance to maintain a firm and effective defensive capability against the risks of deployment or the threat of the use of military resources, and one cannot regard that threat as having come to an end.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Are we to accept reports that President Bush believes that the cold war is now over? If not, in the light of the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Mr. Bush, will he tell us how he would apportion blame for the continuance of the cold war?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The continuance of the tension, which gives the North Atlantic Alliance its continuing purpose, is due to the overwhelming preponderance of forces, and the capability to threaten the use of those forces, in Europe among other places. The fact that most of the countries of eastern Europe are still host to Soviet occupation forces is only one of many reasons for thinking that there are still powerful reasons for being apprehensive about the security of western Europe.

Refuseniks

5. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made on the current position of refuseniks in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. and learned Friend has raised the problem of refuseniks with Mr. Shevardnadze on three separate occasions this year, most recently during Mr. Gorbachev's visit. The Soviet authorities have been left in no doubt that the problem of long-term refuseniks will continue to cast a shadow over Anglo-Soviet relations until a satisfactory and lasting solution is reached.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I welcome my hon. Friend's effort in this regard and I acknowledge that he has had many successes. Is it not true, however, that, much as we hope and pray that Mr. Gorbachev will turn out to be a true reformer, the Soviet concept of human rights—the right to believe, to practise one's own religion and even to emigrate —is a different concept from ours in the West? Given the difference, should not we continue to be careful to try to match practice and theory, to hope for the future and to press on with the campaign?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. It would be churlish not to acknowledge that the system is being operated more humanely than it was, but it is the system that is wrong. People's rights should not depend upon the intervention of my right hon. and learned Friend, myself or Opposition Members but on an independent judiciary and law in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Sumberg: I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend and the Government in supporting the refuseniks in the Soviet Union. May I raise with my hon. Friend the case of George Belitsky of Vilnius, who has been waiting for his visa since 1980? His wife and two sons, one of whom I met this afternoon, are now free, but he still waits in vain. Will my hon. Friend see what he can do to help in this case? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sorry that Opposition Members do not seem to be taking the question seriously, as some of them have an honourable record in fighting for individual cases. I shall certainly look into the case that my hon. Friend mentioned. In New York, Mr. Gorbachev said that secrecy would not be used in future to block exit permits, but that is not what is happening in individual cases, I am afraid. It is still being used in far too many cases.

Pakistan

6. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Prime Minister of Pakistan; and what matters were discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I met Miss Bhutto on 27 March in Islamabad. I congratulated her on her election and the restoration of democracy in Pakistan. We discussed a wide

range of issues including Anglo-Pakistan relations, Afghanistan and other developments in the region, and the possibility of Pakistan's re-entry to the Commonwealth.

Mr. Powell: Did my right hon. and learned Friend manage to impress upon the Prime Minister of Pakistan the undesirability of the continuation of the civil war in Afghanistan? The people who are suffering now are the population of that unfortunate and unhappy country. Did my right hon. and learned Friend agree any proposals with the Prime Minister of Pakistan involving our assistance in putting an end to that civil war?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Prime Minister of Pakistan has good reason to be more aware than almost anyone of the penalties imposed upon her country and on Afghanistan as well as the wider region, by the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan. She and her Government wish nothing better than to see the establishment of conditions in Afghanistan that enable the millions of refugees to return to their own country. She and her country realise the importance of securing the establishment in Afghanistan of a broad-based Government that is truly representative of the people of Afghanistan. That is the way to bring the conflict to an end.

Mr. Worthington: In the continuing discussions with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, will the Foreign Secretary initiate further discussions about the success of the project in the Dir district in the north-west of Pakistan which is concerned with the reduction of the heroin trade from that area and with rural development and crop substitution? That is the kind of aid that we can give, which we give in too stinting a way at the moment. I am conscious of the success of that project and I am interested to learn whether the Foreign Secretary intends to extend such projects both in Pakistan and India to which I gather the focus of the heroin trade has moved.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the importance of co-operation against the drugs trade. We sustain that co-operation with the Governments of India and Pakistan. Miss Bhutto herself has made a firm public commitment to continuing a tough stance on narcotics, and has recently appointed a Minister of State to deal with that subject. We help to fund the crop substitution programme at Dir in the north-west frontier province. We would look sympathetically at any further Pakistani request for help of that kind.

Mr. Wilkinson: Did my right hon. and learned Friend discuss with the Prime Minister of Pakistan the dispute in Kashmir? It would be a development of the utmost gravity for Pakistan if, in addition to extreme instability in Afghanistan, there were to be conflict in Kashmir.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We certainly discussed the importance of improvements in relations between India and Pakistan. There was no need for me to emphasise to Miss Bhutto the need for increased co-operation. I welcomed several positive steps in that direction, including, for example, the agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations and the successful meeting between the two Prime Ministers in December of last year. In that context, we believe that the same method should be adopted towards the possible resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Mrs. Clwyd: Did the Secretary of State discuss the continuing plight of the Kurds within Iraq and the renewed threat forcibly to deport 20,000 of them? If he did not discuss that matter, will he take it up with the Iraqi embassy and with the Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. that question is somewhat wide of the topic, which is Pakistan.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Namibia

7. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government and the United Nations for the publication of a full electoral roll prior to the forthcoming elections in Namibia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): We have made no specific representations on this subject. The United Nations and the South African Government are both well aware of our concern that the elections in Namibia should be free and fair, as set out in the United Nations plan for Namibian independence.

Mr. Pike: I am sure that the Foreign Minister will recognise the problems if those elections are carried out on lines identical to those of the 1978 South African-controlled elections in Namibia, which the Government have repeatedly condemned as a sham. Does she recognise that representations must be made by 16 May, to ensure that the credibility of the United Nations is maintained and that the people of Namibia accept that the elections that are to take place are genuine, free and democratic?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, the election arrangements are a matter for the United Nations and the South African Administrator General. We have made both of them well aware of our concern that the election should be free and fair, as set out in the United Nations plan. The draft registration of voters proclamation was published on 24 April, and comments and representations on the draft have been invited from the interested parties.

We note considerable differences between what was discussed way back in 1978 and what is now under discussion, particularly that there is a minimum voting age of 18, and that is certainly a step forward. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it will need close and constant supervision by the United Nations, and I am glad to say that that is well recognised both in New York and by the special representative in Windhoek.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, sadly, it is all too clear that, because of cost, UNTAG was set up with too few soldiers and that one possibility is that, in the long run, the cost will be greater? Will she confirm that she is still prepared to consider increasing the size of that force and that British troops might be used in such an endeavour?

Mrs. Chalker: We must take careful note of what members of the United Nations on the ground are saying. Cedric Thornberry made it quite clear that, until the full deployment which is taking place has been made, it is not the time to consider additional personnel. Now that armed incidents are reduced, that may not be necessary.

However, as I have said on many occasions, if the United Nations Secretary-General goes to the Security Council to ask for additional personnel, we stand ready to supply them. In fact, we were asked for 10 additions to the signals unit that Britain has already sent, and those 10 will join their fellows, who are already doing excellent work in Namibia.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister agree that there is great concern that South Africa is dominating the agenda for the implementation of UN resolution 435? As there have been severe hiccups, which we certainly hope will not be repeated, will the right hon. Lady accept that, in any future discussions about the preparations for the supervision of free and fair elections and law and order, SWAPO should be included as a free and equal partner in any discussions, instead of its views being put secondhand by third parties?

Mrs. Chalker: I believe that it is for all parties to resolution 435 to ensure that the December agreements and the United Nations plan are fully implemented. That means dealing carefully with the situation as it occurs, which is what the United Nations special representative on the ground is there to do. Not only do he and the Administrator General have to carry out their commitments under the UN plan, they must proceed with the refugee work. The British Government have given £500,000 to help in the return to Namibia of those Namibian refugees, which, indeed, will need to be handled carefully.

Provided that SWAPO remains north of the 16th parallel and that it keeps in communication with the United Nations, there will be far fewer problems than if it makes incursions and excursions that can cause only problems to the peace plan.

Mr. Lester: I have listened carefully to the remarks of my right hon. Friend about UNTAG and the necessary reinforcements. Clearly, the role of the police will be critical in reinforcing free and fair elections. Have we had any requests for advice or help in policing, rather than for military help?

Mrs. Chalker: We have not had such requests up to now. Should such requests be made by the United Nations, of course we shall consider them sympathetically. However, there is an increase in the observer force, and I am certain that the special representative, if he believes it to be necessary, will make such a request via the secretary-general in New York.

Mr. Anderson: Are the Government now honest enough to accept that they have colluded in a massive underfunding of the United Nations exercise in Namibia? Is it not correct, for example, that the Secretary-General has already asked for an increase in the UN police force above 500? How can an adequate electoral roll be established if the UN High Commissioner for Refugees does not have the funds to organise reception centres for exiles, who should return to Namibia within six weeks from 15 May? Will the Government provide funds to send parliamentary observers and monitors to the election in Namibia, as many of our European partners have done already?

Mrs. Chalker: To the best of my knowledge none of our European partners have yet sent observers of any sort. Should that be desirable, of course we will consider it.

I repeat to the hon. Gentleman that we have made it absolutely clear that the refugee work must proceed, which was why we were the very first country to give resources for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to get on with that important job. On the hon. Gentleman's point about underfunding, we have consistently backed the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General on the numbers that his adviser told him were necessary to start the process. The delay in the start of the process was due solely to the arguments being protracted until 1 March, before which no arrangements for deployment could be made. I repeat that we have further said that if the United Nations Secretary-General believes that there is a need for a further increase in the number of police and military observers, we shall, of course, consider that with our partners in the Security Council.

Middle East

8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to believe that a settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and that an international conference, at the right time, will be necessary. We look forward to discussing with Mr. Shamir how his proposal for elections in the occupied territories can contribute to this process when he visits the United Kingdom later this month.

Mr. MacKay: As the PLO appears belatedly to have recognised the existence of the state of Israel, does my hon. Friend agree that it is now not inconceivable that at some appropriate time in the future our Prime Minister might meet Mr. Arafat?

Mr. Waldegrave: We unequivocally welcome the steps forward that have been taken by the PLO. As my right hon. and learned Friend told my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) on 8 February, we are certainly ready to promote further meetings when they can serve a useful purpose.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Under exactly what conditions would the Prime Minister be prepared to meet Yasser Arafat?

Mr. Waldegrave: Any upgrading of meetings would undoubtedly involve my right hon. and learned Friend before they would involve the Prime Minister. The principle on which we have taken such steps has been that they should be seen to be carrying the peace process forward. Meetings should not take place just for the sake of having meetings.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my hon. Friend agree that the middle east peace process is certainly not helped by extremist exhortations to violence emanating from Tehran? In connection with that, what steps is my hon. Friend taking to prepare an international cohesive response and to prepare the necessary contingency measures?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no doubt that the condemnation of the whole House, the European Community and

nations throughout the world has been clear. Incidentally, there has been a clear rejection of Mr. Rafsanjani's remarks by Mr. Arafat and by the PLO for, which I thanked Mr. Bassam abu Sharif, Mr. Arafat's representative, when he was in London recently. We are taking steps within the Community, with our allies and with other friendly countries to get the widest and clearest possible rejection of that intolerable threat.

Mr. Nellist: Given that the weekend saw the bloodiest single day's fighting in the 18-month intifada against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, with four deaths, 343 injuries, including 147 gunshot wounds, the youngest of which was to a seven-month-old baby, has not the time come for the Government to respond as sharply as they have done in the past to Libya and to Iran and to cancel the state visit of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir which is due in 10 days' time?

Mr. Waldegrave: That would be exactly the wrong step to take. Without in any way disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman that the events in Gaza over the weekend were, as our statement at the time said, deplorable and another step downwards, that would make the whole situation worse. At a time when there is just a glimmer of light and a proposal on the table from Mr. Shamir, it is surely right for us to follow the example of the PLO and to try to make something of that statement and to make progress on the basis of what, I recognise, is a minimal proposal. It would be better to do that than to slam the door and not talk.

Mr. Rhodes James: As my hon. Friend is aware, I am a strong friend of Israel, but I have been and remain highly critical of certain actions of the Israeli Government, especially the brutal and indefensible response to the intifada. However, that having been said, does my hon. Friend agree that there are now clear signs that the Israeli Government are responding to the criticisms from inside as well as outside Israel and that they are moving towards negotiation? Surely that should be welcomed and encouraged.

Mr. Waldegrave: Any signs of movement towards negotiation by the Israeli Government will receive not only the support of Her Majesty's Government but, I am sure, that of the whole House. It is to investigate whether there are such signs and to encourage any that exist that it is right for us to welcome Mr. Shamir here.

Mr. Winnick: While I accept the essential need for Israel to recognise the realities and start negotiations with the PLO, should not steps taken by European countries over the latest incitement to mass murder from the Iranian regime be effective, unlike on the previous occasion?

Is it not the case that, to a large extent, Iran is the ringleader of international terrorism, while at home it engages in the murder of political opponents? Is it not time for the international community to recognise that much more needs to be done to punish and isolate this terrorist regime?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman. We in this country can say to some of our colleagues, friends and allies round the world, "We told you so." After the Salman Rushdie affair we urged people to take seriously the irresponsible threats from Iran—some did and some did not. Those who did not now seem to stand indicted. In the face of this further threat the civilised international community must surely unite in practical condemnation.

Mr. Michael Marshall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment about an earlier question in which the Yasser Arafat meeting was mentioned. Will he take on board the fact that when Yasser Arafat was invited to the IPU conference in Budapest in March, it was felt that the exchanges that followed were valuable. When parliamentarians and western journalists considered matters such as the responsibility for the Lockerbie air disaster it resulted in some fruitful discussion.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is quite right. Such meetings between parliamentarians, journalists and other concerned citizens across the sectarian divide are extremely useful. A useful meeting was held at Ditchley over the weekend.

Mr. Kaufman: When Ministers meet Mr. Shamir when he comes to London this month, will they voice the dismay of the House at the daily toll of killings and repression in the Israeli occupied territories? Will they tell him that the House of Commons condemns the Israeli policy that brings about such killings and repression? Will they ask Mr. Shamir why, when the Israeli Government calls for the renunciation by the PLO of its charter and Mr. Arafat then makes a statement of renunciation, instead of welcoming it, the Israeli Government brush it aside, as they do every concession that Mr. Arafat has made? Will they tell Mr. Shamir that his excuses and the patience of the world are running out?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, Sir. When we do so, we shall do so with all the greater strength because of the unity shown by the House.

Bophuthatswana

9. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria Bophuthatswana would need to satisfy in order to be recognised by Her Majesty's Government as an independent nation state.

Mrs. Chalker: The same criteria that have been followed by successive British Governments and which are based on international law. Other factors, including relevant United Nations resolutions, are also taken into account.

Mr. Lawrence: Why does my right hon. Friend not agree that, in international law, Bophuthatswana does fulfil the criteria laid down for recognition? It has a definable territory, a permanent population, a Government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. Does not my right hon. Friend's policy have the rather ludicrous effect of driving Bophuthatswana to stay inside the sphere of influence of South Africa and thus strengthen apartheid, while the Government's policy is to woo South Africa's neighbours away from South Africa's sphere of influence and weaken apartheid? Cannot my right hon. Friend see the total inconsistency of the Government's policy?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. and learned Friend should remember that Bophuthatswana is a homeland which was set up by the South African Government within South

Africa. We bear no ill will to those who live there. We are seeking to get rid of apartheid throughout South Africa. I take up my hon. and learned Friend on what he said about the criteria for recognition. He subtly altered the wording of the third criterion, which involves independence in external relations. That is one of our criteria. These criteria have been used by successive British Governments and are recognised by international law. I know that my hon. and learned Friend has been researching Judge Friedman's views and I understand that, under the terms of the Montevideo convention, they may be different. Our prime cause must be to help South Africa get rid of apartheid throughout the territories, including Bophuthatswana. Until there is a democratic system in South Africa, we cannot consider change.

Dr. Reid: I share the Minister's aim of getting rid of apartheid from South Africa and express my gratitude to her for having the courage to express it, but is it not hypocritical of the Government to set out the criteria in international law that they deem acceptable for independent sovereign nation-statehood while, at the same time, openly and blatantly to support American intervention in, and infringement of, the independent nation-statehood of sovereign Nicaragua?

Mrs. Chalker: I can see no connection between Bophuthatswana and Nicaragua. It is absolutely right that any country that wishes to look after its own affairs must show that it can do so. Bophuthatswana is not an independent country; it remains a homeland of South Africa.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Bophuthatswana is a creation of South Africa for the convenience of South Africa in South Africa and has no right to independence, either de jure or de facto, in international law, and that to try to pretend otherwise is a fraud?

Mrs. Chalker: We have been over this ground many times, and my hon. Friend is absolutely right. These seven territories are in no way independent of the rest of South Africa. They do not fulfil the criteria for recognition as an independent country and I do not see any likelihood of their doing so. I hope that when there is a democratic system in South Africa as a whole, in which all people can have a say, the situation may be different for the people of Bophuthatswana—but it will not be so earlier.

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Lady confirm that it is not a criterion for recognition as an independent country that it should offer free trips to select groups from this House or any other part of the country, although that is a well-established tradition of the South African Government? The South African ambassador was in Cardiff on Monday trying to bribe Welsh rugby players to go to South Africa. Will she tell the ambassador that, only days after three members of his staff were expelled for good reason from this country for involvement in terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland, it was wholly improper for him to come to Cardiff to a reception at the Holiday Inn, as if it was business as usual with South Africa? It very much is not.

Mrs. Chalker: Neither the South African ambassador in London nor the South African Government are in any doubt about what we think about the last issue the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

It will always remain up to individual Members to decide what invitations they accept. Some may choose to go to South Africa and others to Nicaragua—that is an hon. Member's responsibility.

NATO

10. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what matters will be discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I met the secretary-general when he was in London on 24 April. I will see Dr. Woerner again at the end of this month at and for the NATO summit meeting.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that our NATO allies might well agree with the *Daily Mirror's* editorial this morning, which says that Labour's defence policy is as confusing as it is unbelievable? When the laughter finally subsides, and NATO realises that it is nothing more than a policy for flexible surrender, would not the only honourable course left to a Labour Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must try to relate his supplementary question to the original question.

Mr. Hayes: Would not NATO be of the opinion that the only honourable course for a Labour Government would be to withdraw from NATO before they were thrown out?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend draws attention to a sound point, although he takes his fantasy rather far. The fact on which I am sure the NATO Alliance would agree is that the Labour party's new proposals for defence will be as ineffective for the defence of the Alliance as they have been for the uniting of the Labour party.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is a need for NATO to present a united front to the initiatives taken by Mr. Gorbachev? Does he agree that that would be best achieved through a sympathetic understanding of the views of all our allies and is not likely to be achieved by hectoring and browbeating the Federal Republic of Germany over its attitude towards the modernisation of short-range weapons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Alliance has responded and will continue to respond effectively and with unity to the prospects for progress on arms control. I was able to announce those proposals when I spoke first to the Alliance at the beginning of the Vienna conference just two months ago. On the last point, the Alliance has agreed that for the foreseeable future there is no alternative to a strategy of deterrence based on an effective mix of nuclear and conventional forces which will be kept up to date where necessary. That mix includes a continuing requirement for land-based, sea-based and air-launched short-range nuclear forces in Europe. A third zero for land-based missiles is therefore not acceptable. Lance will become obsolete in 1995 and a deployment decision on a

successor will be needed in 1991-92. In order to keep open the necessary options, support for United States efforts to develop a follow-on to Lance is necessary. We will seek from the NATO summit confirmation of all those points that have already been agreed by the Alliance.

Mr. Churchill: I recognise the importance to NATO doctrine of maintaining and modernising our short-range nuclear forces. None the less does the NATO Alliance not have a clear interest in reaching agreement with the Soviet Union on coming down to a common ceiling? For example, if that were to be set at 100 on either side, we could maintain and modernise our own capability and the Soviets would have to abandon 1,300 of their launchers.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is bound to be a substantial difficulty about verification of any conclusion of the kind to which my hon. Friend refers, if that were to be reached by agreement. I agree with him absolutely that there is no reason why the Soviet Union should not reduce its weapons of that kind unilaterally to NATO levels. So far it has undertaken to cut only 24 of 1,608 short-range missile systems. It can do a great deal better than that minimal reduction. It could do it unilaterally and at once.

Mr. Kaufman: When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets Manfred Woerner, the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, will he discuss with him and take into account the statement made by Mr. Woerner last week that he wishes a middle way to be found on the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons at the NATO summit this month? Will he take into account also the statement of the Italian Prime Minister, Mr. de Mita, this week who said:

"Other governments . . . basically agree, but not Mrs. Thatcher. The obstacle is there."

Will the Government explain to the House and to NATO why the Prime Minister is the only obstacle to agreement within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why her bellicosity and obstinacy result in Britain being the only country either in NATO or in the Warsaw pact that wishes to halt the process of nuclear disarmament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In his passion to present a totally false picture the right hon. Gentleman seems, unusually for him, to have overlooked completely the position, for example, of the United States. He will find no difference between the case that we are putting forward and that which the United States is putting forward. We shall be ready to go to the NATO summit, as we have done in the past, to secure an outcome consistent with the security of the Alliance in the long and in the short term.

EC (Fraud)

11. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made by the European Commission to detect and deter fraud in the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: At the meeting of Economic and Finance Ministers on 13 March the Commission undertook to propose fresh measures to combat fraud and mismanagement, notably in agricultural export refunds and intervention storage.

Ministers will take this further at the June meeting of the Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Knight: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what steps have been taken by the European Commission to follow up the call of the Court of Auditors to bring about better financial control in respect of existing abuses of the common agricultural policy? Do not some estimates indicate that fraud in the European Community is costing up to £6 billion a year? That being the case, is it not right that the Government should continue to take the lead and press for further action on this outrageous scandal?

Mrs. Chalker: I, too, have seen the figure of £6 billion as being the cost of fraud to the Community. I understand that it was published in *The Independent* and is a speculative figure based on surmise, not on fact. But that does not alter the fact that this is a serious problem and that large sums are involved, even if we cannot give precise figures at the moment. That is why the British Government welcomed the Court of Auditors' report and ensured that its reports were discussed regularly in Council. At the 13 March meeting that I mentioned, the Commission promised a number of new and revised proposals, including concrete measures to improve controls over export refunds and intervention storage. The head of the anti-fraud unit is discussing the means of operation this month ready for the June meeting of Ecofin where we shall decide on the actual measures.

Mr. Cryer: If the Common Market is so keen and zealous in tracking down fraud and fraudsters, would it not be likely to have an idea of how much fraud is involved? Has the Minister any information to combat the figure of £6,000 million? As over the past four years membership has cost us £5,000 million and we have a deficit in manufactured goods of £11,000 million, does it not behove any Government to keep open the back door of withdrawal from the Common Market as a useful negotiating posture?

Mrs. Chalker: I am not surprised to note that some Opposition Members still favour an out-of-date attitude towards our future. With regard to our deficit on manufactured goods, 75 per cent. of equipment imported is for the re-equipping of factories for their modernisation. Companies are now investing in new plant and equipment in order to become more efficient. If we cannot provide the equipment ourselves, we must import it, and it is better that we import if from the Community which will serve us well. Wherever there is fraud, it must be sought out. However small or large, it must be deterred and detected. We shall put all our energies into doing just that.

Human Rights (Eastern Europe)

12. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress there has been in the development of human rights in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Performance is varied. Hungary and Poland are continuing to take measures to improve human

rights and political freedoms. There has been little or no improvement in Bulgaria or Czecholsovakia or the GDR. Romania is, I am sorry to say, in a class of its own.

Mr. Kirkhope: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Soviet Union's record on human rights is still falling behind its social and economic achievements? Does he also agree that our foreign policy must take into account the individual records of each of the countries of eastern Europe and our assessment of them should be reflected in our general foreign policy decisions?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with both my hon. Friend's points. In particular, on his latter point, it is surely right that we in the United Kingdom and the EC should try to establish trading and other relations with the countries that are making progress and respond to that progress as it develops.

Mr. Eastham: Will the Minister advise the House whether human rghts include the unification and unity of families? A lady in my constituency with a British passport has two children and her Pakistani husband has been denied the right to join her? Is that human rights in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Waldegrave: Unless the hon. Gentleman is arguing for the abolition of all immigration controls—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It has always been the right of any country to maintain immigration controls. The Helsinki final act makes it clear that all signatory countries have the duty to allow people who want to leave a country to do so.

Sir Bernard Braine: Does my hon. Friend agree that the repellent and corrupt Ceausescu regime in Romania sticks out like a sore thumb in eastern Europe, that it has the worst human rights record in Europe and that it has caused a major refugee problem for its Warsaw pact neighbours? Does he further agree that this is a case where the West and the Soviet Union are caused common embarrassment? Is it possible to bring extra pressure to bear on that appalling regime?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with every word that my right hon. Friend says. The situation in Romania is tragic and shows no signs of getting better. The regime defends, with a mixture of childish and Stalinist arguments, the most appalling repression which is clearly an embarrassment to its friends. It would be gratifying to see more overt pressure being put on that regime from countries—other than Hungary, which has its own special reasons for being concerned about Romania—on the eastern side of the iron curtain, which we know are very embarrassed indeed.

Mr. Robertson: Will the Minister accept that hon. Members in all parts of the House warmly applaud and welcome the developments which are taking place in Poland and Hungary and feel that the European Community support that has already been offered should be real and appropriate for the circumstances there? Is he equally aware of our concern for the continuing human rights violations in Czechoslovakia? As hon. Members have pointed out, the indecent and unpardonable activities of the Romanian Government deserve and demand wide and vocal condemnation. Will he ensure that the view of the whole House is reflected in urgent Government action in this matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: Again, I can welcome wholeheartedly the position being taken by the Opposition Front Bench on this issue. There are many violations at present in Czechoslovakia. In particular, it is a scandal that Mr. Havel—perhaps the leading playwright in eastern Europe, some might say in Europe as a whole—is in gaol. We will continue to press very hard indeed on these matters, and we can do so again with redoubled force in view of the support of Opposition Members.

Bophuthatswana

13. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visits by Foreign and Commonweatlh Office officials have been made to Bophuthatswana over the last decade.

Mrs. Chalker: British embassy officials pay regular visits to all the South African homelands, including Bophuthatswana. The details of individual visits are not recorded.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that because it is politically difficult for Ministers to visit Bophuthatswana, it is even more important for their officials to do so to bear out what hon. Members have been reporting for years, which is that this is a rare example of an African multi-racial democracy—*[Interruption.]*—which is attempting to stand on its own two feet economically, which is more than can be said for the front-line states? It is, therefore, a model of what we would like to see the Republic of South Africa become. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear things in this House with which we disagree.

Mrs. Chalker: We recognise what my hon. Friend says—that it appears that apartheid as practised elsewhere in South Africa is not practised in Bophuthatswana—and in that sense the South African Government have something to learn from Bophuthatswana. That does not alter the fact that the whole creation and existence of that homeland is itself an expression of the apartheid that the South African Government forced on it, and nothing that anybody says, here or in Bophuthatswana, will alter that situation.

Fascism

15. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will initiate discussions with his EEC counterparts concerning recent trends in organised Fascist activity throughout Europe; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Any trend in the direction of Fascist revival would be deeply disturbing, and I have no doubt the electorates of western Europe would reject it. I see no need to initiate intergovernmental discussion on the subject.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister know that this weekend a gathering and camp of neo-Nazis from all over Europe is planned to be held in the east midlands? Does she agree that the bringing to this country of Nazi criminals, many of them with records of violence, for a meeting organised by an evil man named John Peacock, who runs the Nazi British National party in Leicester, should be banned, and

that such people should not be allowed into this decent country? In view of the urgency of the matter and of the Home Secretary's failure to reply to my communication about it, will the right hon. Lady undertake to speak to him immediately?

Mrs. Chalker: I am aware of *The Observer* report of 23 April and I am concerned by it. As the hon. and learned Gentleman says, the matter is one for the Home Secretary. We do not have a visa regime for EEC nationals, but I shall certainly draw the hon. and learned Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The way to defeat such occurrences is through debate and elections, not by banning.

Community Charge (Leaflet)

3.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: Before calling the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to ask his private notice question, I should inform the House that the main issue with which it deals is to be the subject of judicial review in the High Court on or before 25 May and is therefore sub judice. The terms of the relevant sub judice resolution allow me to exercise my discretion and to waive the rule if I see fit, and I have decided to do so on this occasion. Dr. Cunningham.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that points of order are taken after questions.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I would like to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such behaviour takes up a lot of time. Dr. Cunningham.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that he is in the House of Commons.

Dr. Cunningham: I should like to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment a question of which I have given him private notice; namely, if he will now abandon the distribution at the taxpayers' expense of the misleading leaflet entitled "The Community Charge (The So-Called 'Poll Tax'): How it will Work for You."

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Gummer): Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gummer: Pending the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister's answer is one for which the House has been waiting. Mr. Gummer.

Mr. Gummer: Pending the hearing before the Divisional Court—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall find it very difficult to call hon. Members shouting from a sedentary position.

Mr. Gummer: Pending the hearing before the Divisional Court of the substantive application by the London borough of Greenwich, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave instructions yesterday to the Department's contractor, the Post Office, to halt distribution of the leaflet in compliance with the terms of the order made on 9 May. My right hon. Friend made immediate application to the court for the earliest possible hearing, and a little more than one hour ago the court agreed to hear the case next Monday.

Dr. Cunningham: Given that the Secretary of State for the Environment has on six previous occasions been found to be acting illegally, is it surprising that on this seventh occasion on which he has fallen foul of the courts he has sent Postman Pat to answer in his place? Does not this latest humiliating exposure of the Secretary of State's attempt to present people in England with misleading and inaccurate information demonstrate once again his cynical abuse of high office?

Why does the leaflet omit any reference to the highly controversial issue of joint and several liability, when the leaflet issued by the Secretary of State for Wales includes it? Does not that contrast prove that the Secretary of State for the Environment is guilty of a deliberate omission of important and objectionable facts about the poll tax?

Given that the judgment in favour of the Labour London borough of Greenwich was delivered at about 3 pm yesterday, will the Minister of State tell the House exactly when his right hon. Friend instructed the Post Office to halt delivery of the leaflets? Is he aware that throughout the day, all over England, the Post Office has continued to deliver it? It has been delivered in my home town of Chester-le-Street—which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice)—and in the constituency of the Secretary of State for the Environment himself.

Does the Minister of State know that his right hon. Friend's constituents have been telephoning Labour party headquarters and my office to complain? Is that not evidence of flagrant contempt of the High Court decision? How can a decision announced at 3 pm yesterday still not have been implemented by lunchtime today? What is the explanation?

Has not the Secretary of State's political trickery already cost taxpayers several millions of pounds, and will not his incompetence and prevarication cost them several million more? Is it not about time to stop making taxpayers foot the bill for this squalid and incompetent exercise of Tory party propaganda?

Mr. Gummer: In my experience, the more offensive the hon. Gentleman is, the weaker is the case whose weakness he is trying to cover up. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that with the hearing taking place on Monday it would be wholly inappropriate for me to enter into the merits of the case—*[Interruption.]* I shall, however, be happy to give the hon. Gentleman any details that he would like about the timing, if he will kindly be quiet enough to listen.

The court made its order at 2.45 yesterday afternoon, without hearing any representations from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Counsel for Greenwich faxed a copy of the order to the Treasury Solicitor two hours later, at 4.45 pm. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are important matters of great interest to the House and to those outside.

Mr. Gummer: It is important for the House to hear the full details for which the hon. Member for Copeland asked. When the hon. Gentleman has heard the figures, the dates and the times, he will be sorry for the form in which he framed his question. Perhaps that is why he is trying not to listen to the answer. The order reached the Department 20 minutes later and the Secretary of State immediately considered its implications with his advisers. As a result of that consideration, he instructed lawyers to seek as early a hearing of the case as possible and at the same time instructed officials—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"]—I will tell exactly the moment.

At the same time my right hon. Friend instructed officials to tell the Post Office to stop distribution until further notice—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] The Secretary

of State gave that order at about 6.20 pm. The COI was telephoned at 6.30 pm. The COI, as agent for the Department, telephoned the Royal Mail immediately, and subsequently the Royal Mail's solicitor, and told them to stop distribution immediately. That was confirmed by fax to the Royal Mail's solicitor shortly after 7.30 pm and the COI then gave instructions to Post Office Counters not to display leaflets in Crown post offices. A letter was delivered by hand from the COI to the Royal Mail at 9 o'clock confirming those instructions.

Therefore, the House will note that at no point from the first delivery of the order to the Government was there any delay whatsoever.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the London borough of Greenwich issued with its rate demand and at ratepayers' expense this year a leaflet which was pure propaganda against the community charge? Will he look carefully into the matter? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Gummer: I am aware of that fact. I am also aware that the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham sent out at ratepayers' expense a document which said— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister has been asked a question and he must be allowed to answer it.

Mr. Gummer: The document said that the poll tax or community charge will require all adults

"to pay the same amount irrespective of their income, size of property or ability to pay."

when there is a rebate which covers 9·5 million people.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The House will agree that the Minister has shown contempt for the people of this country and for the use of public funds, and that nothing he says about any local authority will scrape over the fact that he has acted improperly at a national level. Can the Minister explain to the House the series of delays in notifying the Post Office that it should not deliver the leaflet, which is being delivered all over the country today? Can he explain why the Department was not represented in court, and if it was represented in court, why the message was not sent directly to the Department of the Environment?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is not a lawyer; I am not a lawyer but I know what an ex parte injunction is. The hon. Gentleman shows as much ignorance of the law as he does of the nature of the document. He has clearly neither read the document nor understood what is in it.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us wish that the Post Office would deliver our election addresses as promptly as they have delivered the leaflet? Is my right hon. Friend aware that while some Conservative Members did not share the Government's enthusiasm for the measure last year, that debate is now over, the Bill is an Act and the public have a right to be informed about it? While the courts will decide the accuracy of the leaflet, does not the standard registration form that is recommended by the Department, which will be signed by members of the public, make it clear that there is joint liability between husband and wife?

Mr. Gummer: The standard registration form makes it perfectly clear that there is joint and several liability between husband and wife, so anyone filling it in, unless they cannot read it, will be in no doubt about that fact. If my hon. Friend lived in the London borough of Islington, he would have received a guide which says,

"Scream And Scream Again Poll Tax on Upper Street",

which was paid for by ratepayers. Under the heading,

"What happens if I live with my girlfriend/boyfriend?"

the London borough of Islington fails to mention that if one lives with someone of the same sex one is not liable for their community charge.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Has the Minister discussed this matter with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales? Is this leaflet being distributed in Wales? Has the Attorney-General given clearance for it to be distributed in Wales? Does the Minister agree that in last week's by-election the people of Wales decisively rejected the poll tax?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's last comment shows that this is a political rather than legal argument. Opposition Members should realise that the leaflet that is being distributed door-to-door in Wales is honest, clear and concise, as is the leaflet that will be distributed throughout the rest of Britain.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): In view of the Labour party's quest for the truth, will my right hon. Friend challenge it to come clean with the public and explain how much the wealth tax, on top of the local income tax, on top of national income tax— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question must be confined to the subject of the private notice question.

Mr. Gummer: The House would take more kindly the comments of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) if he had answered questions put to him about his two-tax policy, which he has failed to do, letting down the British people as a result.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): As the Minister has been caught with his hands in other people's letter boxes, will he take immediate steps to consult his Scottish colleagues to determine how much misinformation was distributed in Scotland last year at public expense? Do 80 per cent. of Scottish people remain bitterly opposed to the poll tax in spite of or because of the Government's campaign of misinformation?

Mr. Gummer: The community charge leaflet that has been distributed in England, like the material that was distributed in Scotland, is accurate, wholly true and entirely without misinformation. The Government will stand and fight on that.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the leaflet is one of a series of nine being distributed that give the true picture of the community charge? The reason for the smokescreen thrown up by the Opposition is that they recognise that the more people know about it the more popular it will be.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The more people know about the community charge, the more they will support it. The Opposition are so frightened of the community charge that they are not prepared to call it by its proper name.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the Minister tell the House how many judgments have been entered against the Secretary of State for the Environment since 1979? In the event of appeal being dismissed, will the Conservative party meet the cost of the leaflets and the legal charges? Who decided that the Central Office of Information was the proper organisation to inform the Post Office not to distribute the leaflets further, bearing in mind that the normal function of the COI is to arrange lunches for hon. Members?

Mr. Gummer: The COI is the agent for the Department of the Environment in its dealings with the Post Office. That is why it was properly asked to carry out its job as agent. The Government are utterly confident that the document that has been put out is wholly fair and concise and, without question, we shall win the case.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): If the pamphlet is withdrawn, will my right hon. Friend appeal to the leader of the Labour party—I mean this sincerely—to use what influence he has over the Labour London boroughs to persuade them to stop handing out leaflets, such as the one I have in my hand, which cause distress and anxiety to pensioners and poor people, describe the poll tax as a kind of plague and, unfortunately, tell people to deny that they have received an official form and urges the general public, when someone comes to the door, to deny who they are. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be better if the Labour party was to start having pamphlets which were acceptable because they told the whole story rather than this rubbish, which genuinely upsets simple people, poor people, and pensioners?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend would agree that the Opposition's case is undermined when we see the material that has emerged from, for example, the Lambeth and Norwood Labour party, which says:

> "If canvassers come round to question you, say you are the baby-sitter or looking after the premises while your friend is away . . . Wait a week or two and then write back saying your dog ate the form, it fell in the washing-up, or you never received a form . . . any excuse will do."

That is what the Labour party wants to tell the people. We want to tell them the truth.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): First, on the Minister's own account, is it not true that the first reaction of the Secretary of State to the decision was not to carry out the terms of the injunction, but to discuss a challenge to it in the courts? Should not the first response of any law-abiding Minister, particularly a Minister belonging to a party that claims a special position on law and order, have been to contact the Post Office immediately to give the court's instructions? Secondly, does there not appear to have been some deliberate delay so that it would be more difficult for the Post Office to carry out those instructions? Thirdly, can the Minister explain——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly, please.

Mr. Cryer: Can the Minister explain why the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), failed to notify hon. Members adequately of her visit to Leeds and Bradford to distribute the leaflets personally? Should she not be involved in getting them back so that the injunction is carried out?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that it was somehow improper for my right hon. Friend to spend an hour and 35 minutes discussing with lawyers the precise import of the order. If he had not spent that time, he might have made a decision that broke the contract we had with the Post Office. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would accept that it was proper to decide what the order demanded and then to do it, which is what my right hon. Friend did. The hon. Gentleman has never run anything in his life, so he is not in a position to make complaints.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is my right hon. Friend aware that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has as much right to be heard as anyone else.

Mr. Shaw: Is my right hon. Friend aware that we discussed the community charge in Committee for 143 hours, considering an immensely complex Bill, and that the Bill is so complex that he has my congratulations on getting his Department to produce an excellent summary of it? Is he aware that the Act is 179 pages long and that it goes on for 100,000 words? Is he aware that his summary is only about 2,000 words and is extremely efficient? Furthermore, is he aware that his summary leaflet deals with the issues about which my constituents want to hear?

Mr. Gummer: It is clear that a large number of people in Britain want to know more about the community charge, including the borough of Scunthorpe, which has distributed to its ratepayers a leaflet that says:

> "The poll tax will be a flat rate charge for local services payable at the same rate by all adults."

That is a lie.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The Minister will recall that yesterday afternoon on this very issue the Prime Minister told my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) that it was

> "vital . . . that people have accurate information".—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 722.]

The Minister will also recognise that we do not need courts or lawyers to tell us that the leaflet is both misleading and inaccurate. To avoid wasting any further public money, will the Government agree to withdraw the leaflet immediately? In view of what the Prime Minister said yesterday, would not the honourable thing for the Secretary of State to do be to resign before he is sacked by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Gummer: As always, my right hon. Friend is right and the hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): As the Divisional Court has seen fit to grant an injunction in respect of a leaflet which was in every respect accurate, why does not my right hon. Friend make similar applications to the Divisional Court to prevent the publication of the appalling leaflets to which he has referred?

Mr. Gummer: Because I believe that the public will see through the nonsense of the Opposition and recognise the difference between the truth as presented clearly and concisely by the Government and the party political propaganda presented by the Opposition.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating the London borough of Greenwich on bringing this matter to the

court. Will the Minister tell the House how much this piece of Tory party propaganda cost the taxpayer, and if the appeal is turned down, what will happen to the leaflet? If it was a local authority that had been caught out, there would be demands for surcharge. Will the Secretary of State be surcharged or will he add hypocrisy to recidivism? Surely the best defence for the Secretary of State is to go into court and cop a plea of guilty but insane.

Mr. Gummer: No public funds have been used for Tory party propaganda; that would be entirely wrong. A great deal of public funds appear to have been used by local authorities for Labour party propaganda.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. I shall allow three more questions from either side and then we must move on.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that not a single line of the document in question has been challenged on its factual content, that all the furore is about an omission and that, without printing the entire Act, there was no possible method of avoiding omissions? Will he also confirm that this is an interim injunction and not a final judgment and that the baying and bawling from the Opposition show that they are making hay while the sun shines and are dubious about the final judgment?

Mr. Gummer: I think that my hon. Friend is wrong. The furore is not about an omission; it is an attempt to stop people knowing about a charge that they are to pay and to hide the fact that the Opposition do not dare tell people about the two taxes that they would introduce instead.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Can the Minister shed any light on the reason for the different wording of the leaflet in England as compared with that in Wales? Is it not time that the Government realised that the poll tax is regarded as equally pernicious in both countries?

Mr. Gummer: Happily, in this country we have three Secretaries of State who are responsible for environmental matters. Each leaflet was written separately. Each leaflet is different. That is proper, because each country is different.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that action will in no way impede the introduction of the community charge and, therefore, will mean that the recent local elections were the very last in which there was no full accountability of what local councils do? That is why the Labour party is concerned about the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: The reason Opposition Members hate the community charge is that, for the first time, they will be responsible to the electorate instead of to their local management committees.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Minister said that the document was accurate, wholly true and entirely right. In fact is is full of disinformation, inaccurate and entirely untrue. It states that, if a local council wishes to spend more, the community charge will go up. It does not state that 75 per cent. of local council expenditure is controlled by the Government through the business rate and the revenue support grant. If either of them goes down, local council expenditure will go up. Why does the document not state that?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that 75 per cent. of the money which local councils spend comes from taxpayers and business ratepayers. That is not control; that is paying the price of local government.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is it not essential that there is accurate and fair information on the community charge? This week, the Labour party distributed in my constituency leaflets which stated that the new tax will be the same for the rich and the poor. That is a deliberate lie, because the leaflet takes no account of the fact that, for poor people, there will be rebates of up to 80 per cent. As half of local government funding comes from national taxpayers, the top 10 per cent. of wealthy families will pay 15 times more for local government than the bottom 10 per cent. of families.

Mr. Gummer: The truth is clear. Those who need help to pay the community charge will get it. The truth is stated in the document that was put out by the Government. If anyone wants to see anything misleading, all that they have to do is to look at what local branches of the Labour party have put out. It is because Labour Members are ashamed of what they put out that they tabled this private notice question today.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): How does the Minister respond to statements by senior civil servants at the Central Office of Information at lunchtime today that there are lies, damned lies and the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman now has the worst reputation but one in this House for making statements under the cover of privilege which he dare not make outside.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In case there has been any inadvertent misleading of the House, I should be grateful if you would ask the Minister whether, although not formally represented, Government officials were present at the court hearing.

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to ask that question.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. John Gummer): To make it absolutely clear, the Government were not able to make their representations to the court. [HON. MEMBERS: "Were you in court?"] The Government were not able to make their representations in the court —[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer the question —simply because it was an ex-parte injunction. Therefore, the Government were not able—the Government had the advantage of the fact that an official was present in the court. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] The situation is perfectly clear. The court's order has to be received as an order in its fulness, otherwise no lawyer will advise on it. I know that to be true because I asked for advice when the material was not in front of us. Advice was not forthcoming because no lawyer worth his salt will give advice on an order the contents of which he has not got.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I remind you that during the one hour of Question Time there was only one question—No. 11—that directly concerned the House, and that was about the finances of the EEC? The taxpayer contributes £1·6 billion to the EEC and is directly concerned about the fraud in the EEC. On the other hand, for instance, you allowed a discussion of about 10 minutes on the situation in the middle east. I have no doubt that every citizen of the middle east will be waiting to hear tomorrow what the House of Commons has said about its problems. Surely it is wrong to have a truncated discussion of the EEC in questions to the Foreign Office. It is a disgrace that we, on behalf of the British taxpayer, could discuss that issue for only two minutes. Is there not a very strong case for a reconsideration of our procedures, so that, at the very least, we get the old quarter of an hour in which we can discuss this country's most important alliance?

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I shall hear hon. Members, further to that particular point of order.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am on your side. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) does not mean to criticise you, Mr. Speaker, and it is very difficult, but we had two questions on a place called Bophuthatswana. I think about 5 per cent. of hon. Members in the House know where it is. As a result of those two questions, we had five supplementary questions. On the European question we had——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think we should have a debate on the matter. I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. If he had been present, he would know that there was no further supplementary question apart from that of the hon. Gentleman who asked the question on the second of those two questions on that country, which I too find it difficult to pronounce.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. On the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), it is a difficult judgment at Question Time. We went slowly today, because there were very long answers, and some supplementary questions with very long answers, too. I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

On the EEC question, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to go back to what happened in, I think, the last Parliament, he should pursue the matter through the usual channels.

Dr. Cunningham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not now clear from the Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that Government officials were present yesterday in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court? Is it not also clear from the Minister's answer that the Government, and especially the Secretary of State, prevaricated, obfuscated and delayed for six hours before ensuring that the decision of the court was put into practice, thus ensuring that, in spite of the decision of the judge, deliveries of the leaflet went ahead throughout today? Is not that a constructive contempt of court? Is it not a further contempt of the House that the Secretary of State is not here to answer for all those matters?

Mr. Gummer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman's point of order, if it is one, is entirely without foundation. The situation is that, the moment that we had any inkling that Greenwich had obtained some kind of order, I sought immediately to get the details of that order. The moment I got them, I immediately took action upon them. If Greenwich had wanted us to deal with it earlier, it could have arranged its affairs in a way which would have meant that we would have known—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have an extension of Question Time now. *[Interruption.]* Order. We shall doubtless return to this matter on other occasions.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose——*

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose——*

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery) *rose——*

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North) *rose——*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose——*

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet and I must ask the House to listen to me. We have a Committee stage today, followed by a Ways and Means resolution, followed by a prayer. We have a long day ahead of us and we should now move on.

Mr. Rooker: I have a point of order for you, Mr. Speaker, on this matter, not for the Minister. It involves

your decisions and your control of the Order Paper. Until today I had never been seriously questioned at the Table Office about the term "poll tax" in a written question, but today I was. I raise this with you, Mr. Speaker because I was told, "Soon, Mr. Rooker, decisions will have to be taken about this," and clearly those decisions will have to be taken by you. I do not ask you to rule on this now, but point out the words "poll tax" appear twice on the front cover of the leaflet about which the previous exchanges occurred. Indeed, it is commonly known as the "poll tax".

Hon. Members: No, it is not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House should allow me to hear.

Mr. Rooker: I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to give a ruling so that hon. Members are free to use expressions and to table questions in the common parlance of our constituents—as agreed by the Government, who now know it as the poll tax. I ask for your consideration of this matter.

Mr. Speaker: This is the first that I have heard of it, but I shall look into that matter.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Since when has a point of order been an extension of Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: Very frequently, I am afraid.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. *[Interruption.]* I am not hearing any more questions on this matter under the guise of a point of order, but if they are on a different matter, I shall hear them.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different matter, Mr. Nellist?

Mr. Nellist: It is a point of order, Mr. Speaker— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear any points of order that are not concerned with the poll tax, or the community charge, or whatever any Member of the House likes to call it.

Dr. Reid: My point of order does not specifically concern the poll tax or the community charge, but I ask your guidance on procedure in the House, Mr. Speaker. If a statement were to be made and a long question session followed on a matter of great national importance, such as the Government's handling of taxpayers' money, and if, after an hour and a half of such questions it was discovered, following the closure of that question session on a point of order raised by the Opposition Front Bench, that all those questions had been predicated on an initial statement that had concealed information from Members of the House, would it be in order, in circumstances concerning the poll tax, or whatever, for an Opposition Member to be justified in demanding that we should have a further extension of questions to elicit the true information on that subject?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical matter.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*—

Mr. Cryer *rose*—

Mr. Winnick *rose*—

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order on the private notice question, but I will take points of order on a different matter.

Mr. Carlile: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take Mr. Carlile's point of order if it is on a different matter.

Mr. Carlile: My point of order, Mr. Speaker, concerns the position of Ministers who may have acted in contempt of court. If it happened—and from what has been said it appears that it happened—that a Minister who had knowledge of an injunction ignored it for six hours, will you, Mr. Speaker, ask the Attorney-General to advise this House in a statement whether that Minister was in contempt of an order of the House?

Mr. Speaker: That would be a matter for the courts.

Control of Electronic Surveillance Devices

4.14 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): At long last, I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to control the manufacture and sale of electronic surveillance equipment in the United Kingdom.

Although this matter is less sensational than what has gone before, the Bill's supporters and I believe that it is no less important. The Bill is necessary because of the growing availability in this country of electronic surveillance devices, which are commonly known in this and other countries as bugging equipment. There is no real impediment to the use of such equipment in this country. It can be sold over the counter in the relevant retail outlets for relatively modest prices. The equipment can be used to invade the privacy of third parties. The Bill's supporters and I regard that practice as grossly offensive. In line with other pieces of legislation introduced by other Back Bench Members, my Bill discourages that practice.

Technical developments are making the position a great deal worse. These devices are now becoming technically miniaturised and can be hidden in everyday office equipment and other equipment in houses and offices. These devices can be attached to the outside of buildings and walls, to windows, glass panes or whatever. When they are in place the conversations taking place inside the building can be picked up from anything from 1,000 yards to a few miles away.

My Bill questions why law-abiding citizens in this country should wish to use such devices to eavesdrop on other people's affairs. These devices are such that those people who are being snooped upon—for that is exactly what it is—may not know what is happening.

If hon. Members consult the advertising material for these devices, as I have done in some considerable detail, they will find that the equipment is sold for the purpose of, "discreet listening". Do hon. Members believe that the House should support discreet listening by the use of such equipment? We should not support it. The use of such devices could lead to a massive invasion of privacy. The Bill rectifies that position. It is much the same as the Anti-Hacking Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), which is before the House and which deals with eavesdropping on computer-held information.

Eavesdropping is occurring in many guises. My Bill will ensure that, from the time of enactment of the Bill, all such devices would be licensed by the Home Office. The Act would apply not only to home manufactured devices but to a considerable number of devices imported into this country. Therefore, unlicensed equipment could not be sold in this country, and that would equally apply to another growth industry in this country: counter-surveillance equipment. We need such equipment to discover whether surveillance equipment is being used against us.

The Bill's supporters also strongly believe that the offence should be made a criminal offence. Prosecutions would occur far more easily and, perhaps just as important, a clear signal would go out to the community that the invasion of privacy about which I am talking will not be tolerated by the House.

This matter is of particular significance for companies. One company taking over another would be at a considerable advantage if it knew what the other company was thinking about the takeover. The same applies to new products brought out by companies. Should not new products before they are launched be the business of the company that thought of them rather than the business of everyone else who can use this equipment?

This must be a criminal offence because there is almost no legal protection at present. I do not know how it strikes other hon. Members, but it came as a surprise to me to learn that it is not illegal to listen in to other people's conversations—I do not mean in the street, but in their homes or offices. An Englishman's or a Scotsman's home is no longer the castle that it used to be. The only slender protection—this is disgraceful—in this country lies in the fact that if these devices transmit unauthorised radio signals their use is illegal. The same occasionally applies when they are used in conjunction with telephone lines or equipment. Only those instances are illegal, not stealing information from a third party. My Bill will rectify that.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary recognised these weaknesses in his letter to me of 4 August 1988:

"Radio surveillance devices are unlikely to cause interference to other radio users simply because if they did their use would quickly be detected and their purpose defeated."

We are entitled to wonder why, if he believes that, he does not act on it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am grateful for that support.

My Bill would also provide another measure of protection, in the form of ensuring that registers are kept of those who manufacture, sell and buy the equipment. We need to know where the equipment is going and for what purposes it is being bought. My impression is that the Home Office thinks the equipment is being bought for legitimate purposes; I do not believe it. Such registration would give a clear signal to the community that abuse will not be tolerated in this country. That abuse is occurring is evident in the words of a major retailer and manufacturer of this equipment, who said:

"I never sit in judgment on or moralise about why a company or individual should be buying surveillance equipment."

My sponsors and I are of the same mind: retailers should exercise judgment. In its absence, we believe that legislation is necessary. For these reasons and in that spirit I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. James Cran, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Matthew Carrington, Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. Andrew Hargreaves, Mr. Dudley Fishburn, Mr. Alan Amos, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Douglas French and Mr. James Paice.

CONTROL OF ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE DEVICES

Mr. James Cran accordingly presented a Bill to control the manufacture and sale of electronic surveillance equipment in the United Kingdom: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 137.]

Point of Order

4.24 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I record with you, in regard to the questions asked today on Bophuthatswana, that in evidence given to the Select Committee on Members' Interests by the person who represents that area of South Africa in London, we were informed that 36 Members of the House of Commons, all Conservatives apart from one, have been sent there free of charge, all expenses paid, within the last few years. That information was given in the evidence to the Committee.

We were also told that the airport to which they flew was based within the fuller Republic of South Africa, that is to say, not within the area that we are talking about, and that most people went on to other towns and cities in South Africa. It seems that Bophuthatswana is no more than a freebie stopping-over place for people wishing to visit South Africa.

Mr. Speaker: Those facts would have been recorded in the Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They are not.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, about what was said earlier. If you allow a private notice question, I accept that on a number of occasions the Secretary of State to whom the question is addressed is not present. Where the Secretary of State is directly involved, should he not be here to answer the question? Failing that, should there not be an apology from the Minister who answers in his place? On a matter where the Secretary of State has been directly involved in the court and in Parliament, since he was not here to answer the private notice question, should not the Minister of State at least have given an explanation?

Mr. Speaker: It is not a matter of order in the Chamber. It is a matter for the Government which Minister answers questions or makes statements.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope the point of order is not about the matter that has just been raised.

Mr. McLoughlin: No, Mr. Speaker; it is further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). In regard to hon. Members declaring foreign travel, it might be useful for clarification to be included in the Register of Members' Interests about what foreign travel hon. Members should declare. Certain hon. Members have been on foreign trips that do not appear in the Register.

Mr. Speaker: I have always understood that trips paid for on behalf of hon. Members should be recorded.

Orders of the Day

Finance Bill

(Clauses Nos. 1, 32, 33, 44, 51 and 138)

Considered in Committee. [Progress 9 May.]

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

Ordered,

That the order in which proceedings in Committee of the whole House on the Finance Bill are to be taken shall be Clause 51, Clause 33, Clause 32, Clause 44, Clause 138, Clause 1.—*[Mr. Major]*

Clause 44

CLOSE COMPANY LOANS: BUSINESS EXPANSION SCHEME.

4.27 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 32, line 14, leave out '14th March 1989' and insert '15th March 1988'.

It is important at the outset to sketch the background to the clause and the amendment that we are discussing. By means of clause 44 the Government are closing a loophole that gives enormous scope for abuse. We welcome the change but we wish to see the restriction biting harder and operating retrospectively to Budget day 1988 rather than Budget day this year.

We have long been highly sceptical of the merits of the business expansion scheme. It was established under the Finance Act 1983, supposedly to encourage risk investment by individuals in new equities. It was designed supposedly to close the equity gap that everyone agreed existed at that stage and that still exists. It provided for substantial tax incentives, with tax relief on income tax at the highest marginal rate. The highest rate is now 40 per cent. At that time it was 60 per cent. It is worth noting that the 60 per cent. provision persisted until 5 October last year, six months after the band itself had disappeared in the Budget changes.

In addition to income tax relief on business expansion scheme investment, there is full capital gains tax relief on disposal, provided that the investment was taken out after 1986. For investment before 1986, slightly different rules apply. In other words, the business expansion scheme gives scope for two lots of tax relief—tax relief on income in relation to the initial investment, and tax relief on capital gains in relation to the profit made by the investment over a five-year period. Not surprisingly, as a result of the generous double relief thereby available, the business expansion scheme has become a means of tax avoidance for higher rate taxpayers rather than of raising capital for risky but good quality new companies.

Last year, in debate on the Floor of the House and in Committee, we spelled out our concerns about the business expansion scheme and the way in which it was developing. We highlighted research which was published last year by the Small Business Research Trust. That research revealed a number of worrying factors in relation to BES investment. First, it noted that there was an increasing use of the business expansion scheme for

[Mr. Chris Smith]

asset-backed and non-risky enterprises, predominantly in the wholesale, retail, real estate and leisure sectors of the economy, not in manufacturing.

Secondly, the report revealed that BES investment was increasingly the preserve of top rate taxpayers. It started out in the first year of operation as a relatively low percentage of top rate taxpayers; it is now almost exclusively the preserve of people in that economic bracket.

Thirdly, the Small Business Research Trust revealed that there were profound regional inequalities in BES investment. For example, 51 per cent. of all BES investments and 65 per cent. of invested BES capital went to the south-east and East Anglia between 1983 and 1986 —way above the proportion of normal investment and capital in those regions' share of the overall national economy.

Fourthly, the Small Business Research Trust revealed that, as well as having the lion's share of BES investment, the south-east and East Anglia were attracting BES investment funds from the north. In other words, the BES was ensuring a north-south flow of capital, precisely the reverse of what we should be endeavouring to achieve in our economy with an underheated north and an overheated south. Most investors in the BES live in the south-east, but an even higher proportion of BES investment is placed in the south-east.

The authors of the Small Business Research Trust document published last year have since updated their work and, in a report in the *Financial Times* last Monday, they confirm that changes that were purportedly made by the Government last year to encourage greater investment outside the south-east have not had that effect.

The *Financial Times* on Monday reports:

"A limit of £500,000 per BES issue per year imposed by Mr. Nigel Lawson . . . in the 1988 Budget"—

that was the principal change for the better introduced by the Government last year—

"will not have much effect, the researchers say. The limit was designed to encourage more investment outside the south-east but the region had 352 investments worth under £500,000 in its first five years out of a national total of 712."

In other words, despite the Government's intention of using the £500,000 limit brought in last year to encourage investment under the BES outside the south-east, it is extremely unlikely, according to the research carried out by Southampton university and the university of Ulster, that it is having that effect.

The fifth point that that report last year drew out was that the cost per job created by BES investment was increasing as the scheme developed year by year. Even in 1983-84, the cost per job created was higher than that for other small firm schemes, and in subsequent years that disparity got worse.

All those criticisms of the BES—the regional inequality, the north-south flow of capital, the increasing use of asset-backed non-risky enterprise, the increasing preserve of the top rate taxpayers and the increase in the cost per job created—still apply. They apply the more so because of the principal change that the Chancellor made last year.

That change was to expand the BES, and the tax relief available under it, to the acquisition and letting of private rented property under the assured tenancy scheme introduced under the Housing Act 1988. The great majority of BES investment now goes into precisely that form of investment—into the private rented property scheme.

That is not surprising. There is, for a start, a much higher limit on the overall BES investment for private rented property than there is for any other sector, with one exception. That higher limit for private rented property is £5 million per scheme, rather than the limit of £500,000 which exists for other sectors of the economy.

Secondly, investment in property is almost entirely asset-backed; it is far less risky than investment in other sectors. Thirdly, it is virtually entirely non-productive. Fourthly, it rests on the prospect of escalating property values.

The impact of interest rates currently means that property values may not be escalating as fast as they have in the last three years, but that position will not last for ever. Since 1978, the retail price index has risen by just under 100 per cent., whereas property values have risen by nearly 400 per cent. The return from investment in property, as opposed to investment in most other sectors of the economy, is considerably more lucrative.

Investment under the private rented property scheme of the BES is based on assured tenancies, which in fact are anything but assured. For example, schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988, which applies specifically to assured tenancies, reveals that there are 16 different grounds on which a landlord letting property under assured tenancy rules can obtain possession of that property from the tenant.

Indeed, those facts were spelled out in many of the documents promoting BES investment put out by BES financiers during the last year, and I will give just one example. Chancery Securities plc, in its description of the investment that is available to the BES investor, sets out in clear detail the grounds for claiming possession, either on mandatory or discretionary grounds, as spelled out in the Housing Act.

It is clear from the way in which BES investment in private rented property has been marketed that investors are expected to use those grounds to obtain possession from tenants when they wish to do so. Those same prospectus spell out the ease with which a BES company can at the end of the five-year period, after which capital gains tax relief becomes available, transfer the property that it owns, thereby releasing the capital gains to the benefit of its investors.

The Johnson Fry plc "Bulletin" for July 1988 set out on page 6 the details of how it is effectively possible to buy out tenants at the end of a five-year period. The Assured Property Management plc prospectus sets out a number of exit routes, as it describes them, whereby a company can be sold to a third party for cash, exchanged for shares in another company, or its assets realised and the proceeds distributed to its shareholders in a liquidation. Alternatively, it is suggested that the company might seek a public quotation on the stock market and merge with other companies for that purpose. A variety of different devices are available whereby a BES company's profits can be realised at the end of the five-year period, thereby freeing the investment for profiteering by its individual investors.

The entire scheme is a recipe for bad landlordism, for tenant insecurity, and for pocketfuls of tax relief for top rate taxpayers. When that change to the scheme was

announced in last year's Budget and private rented property was included, even the *Evening Standard* noted that various commentators were saying that the scheme "could become Britain's number one tax shelter." Referring to the provision for private rented property, the article concluded:

"Rachman, one suspects, would not have been slow to take advantage of the scheme if it had been around in the 1960s."

The predictions made in the *Evening Standard* in March 1988 are coming true. The opportunities offered by the BES to invest in private rented property have totally distorted the BES market. The vast majority of such investment is now being made in assured tenancy properties. That is the background to the specific subject of the clause and the amendment.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The hon. Gentleman makes a number of allegations about BES landlords. Can he produce evidence to show that BES landlords are behaving anything remotely like the way in which Rachman behaved?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman represents a constituency in which a number of private landlords already operate, so he ought to know the answer to that question better than most.

Mr. Carrington: I do.

Mr. Smith: The BES scheme offers an opportunity for bad landlordism in a way that no previous tax shelter opportunity did. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, because of the five-year rule applying to BES investments, there is no point in a landlord seeking to regain possession of his property during the first year of the scheme's operation—and it is only in its first year of operation now. Only in the fifth year will such action have any point. I suspect that landlords who have established property under the BES will use all sorts of devices to get their tenants out. I also suspect that a good deal of that will be happening in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and his constituents—who, we hope, will have voted in a different Member of Parliament by then—will doubtless reflect on his remarks.

4.45 pm

It has become obvious over the past year that a massive abuse has been in operation—even by the standards of the already "abusive" device of the private rented property scheme. Through the use of a close company structure with a total of nine shareholders, tax relief was becoming available not only on BES investment itself, but on the interest on the borrowing. Triple tax relief was available, especially to an investor putting his money into private rented property: relief on income tax on the investment, on income tax on the borrowing and on the tax on the capital gain after five years.

An additional bonus available to the investor, indirectly rather than directly, was the small company rate of corporation tax, which, in the case of close companies, would be applicable rather than the large company rate. Some of the BES marketing plans attempted to link BES investment with pension fund investment to provide even more scope for relief. With such enormous scope for tax relief, it is not surprising that the BES, with the use of the close companies' device, was being marketed aggressively in the latter part of the last financial year, and in the run-up to the Budget in particular.

Let us consider exactly what this scheme would mean. It is worth dwelling in some detail on an example that reveals the exact nature of the abuse. Let us suppose tha someone invests £40,000 of his income, at a top marginal tax rate of 40 per cent., in a BES property venture. On that investment he receives tax relief at the highest marginal rate, amounting to a total relief on the investment of £16,000.

To invest his £40,000 the investor borrows the entire amount, using the close company device, incurring interest payments of £6,000 a year and receiving tax relief on the interest as well as on the investment. He receives £2,400 a year in tax relief, amounting over five years to a total of £12,000. In the course of five years, he has thus obtained £28,000 in tax relief. The total cost of the interest that he has paid out is £30,000. The net cost to the investor, who has not put one penny of his own money into his BES investment of £40,000, is £2,000.

The investor requires a return of 5 per cent. over five years on that investment to recoup its entire cost. Of course, a growth of only 1 per cent. in that investment is extremely unlikely. Let us be moderate in our projection and assume that the investment grows by 10 per cent. a year. At the end of five years that £40,000 investment is worth £64,420. That represents a capital gain of £24,420. The cost to the investor who has not put in a penny of his own money has been £2,000 over five years and his tax-free capital gain after five years, on a conservative estimate, is £24,420. That profit will have been made almost entirely at the expense of the taxpayer, as it will have been made on the back of £30,000-worth of tax relief by using the device of the close companies system.

The people who were responsible for devising and marketing the operation have not been blind to its attractions for those who invest. Mr. Charles Fry, the chairman of Johnson Fry, which has been in the lead in marketing such operations in the past six months, in a press release on 10 January 1989 said:

"The opportunity to invest in our . . . Companies, with their tax advantages, guarantees and no requirement to invest a penny of the client's own cash, must broaden the market tremendously. Indeed, there would seem to be no way in which a high rate taxpayer can make a case for not investing; unless, of course, he believes that residential property will fall over the next five years."

That is an extremely unlikely eventuality, the risk is extremely low and the use of the close company device has become money for old rope for an investor who takes advantage of it.

I wrote to the Chancellor on 3 March demanding that he took action to close the loophole in the Budget. The final paragraph of my letter stated:

"This cannot possibly have been your intention when introducing the scheme last year. Variations of this scheme are being marketed in a pre-Budget frenzy by—amongst others—Johnson Fry, Allied Dunbar and Centreway Development Capital. They are, not surprisingly, being snapped up. Frankly, this is a gravy-train for top-rate taxpayers and has nothing whatsoever to do with risk investment to close the equity gap which is what BES was supposed to be all about when it was launched. I very much hope that you will take action to end this abuse on 14 March."

Therefore, we were very pleased that the Chancellor took action on 14 March to end that abuse. Clause 44 of the Finance Bill does away with close company relief where it is being sought in connection with a BES investment. However, we do not believe that clause 44 goes far enough. That is why we have tabled amendment No. 4, which seeks to backdate the closing of the loophole.

[Mr. Smith]

Some will doubtless argue that retrospective tax legislation is always wrong. We agree that in general terms it is to be avoided, but Governments of all political persuasions have used it in the past. Indeed, the Finance Bill contains one provision which might be deemed retrospective. The close company abuse of the business expansion scheme represents so much of an abuse that it is a special case because, first, it is not just one tranche but two of evasive relief. Secondly, quite clearly, when the Government introduced the private rented property scheme last year, they did not intend to enable close companies to be used in that way. Thirdly, the abuse has been especially focused on the assured tenancy operation; to my knowledge it has not been focused on any other sector of the economy using BES provisions. Finally, it has enabled top-rate taxpayers to profiteer at the expense of the generality of ordinary taxpayers.

There is no logical, moral, social or financial justification for that loophole; nor was there any last year. That is why we believe that the loophole should be closed not just now but from last year's Budget day, and I urge my hon. Friends and Conservative Members to support amendment No. 4.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) began by saying that the Opposition have long been sceptical of the business expansion scheme. I am not sure how long he meant. I well remember that the Leader of the Opposition welcomed the expansion of the business expansion scheme in 1986 and 1987. It was only in 1988, when we placed some restrictions on the business expansion scheme, that he began to criticise it. When we expanded the scheme he was in favour of it, but when we restricted it a little he became more critical. I do not think that that stands up to what the hon. Gentleman said.

It is a pity that the Opposition cannot take a more positive view of the business expansion scheme, which has altered the venture capital business in Britain. It has encouraged more people to invest in the stock market and in unquoted companies and small businesses. One of its main functions has been to educate the investing community and the City institutions. More than £1 billion has been raised since the scheme started, and that is a welcome development.

The hon. Gentleman quoted a number of points from the Small Business Research Trust reports of last year and this year, but he did not quote from the Peat Marwick study into the scheme that we commissioned and which produced its findings in 1985. It is significant that Peat Marwick discovered a high degree of additionality. It discovered that 70 per cent. of the money invested in small businesses and small companies would never have been raised if the BES had not existed. The figures for individuals were even higher, showing that 94 per cent. of the amount invested by individuals under the BES would not otherwise have been invested in those companies.

Not only has the venture capital business with tax relief developed, but a venture capital business that is not dependent on tax relief has developed in Britain. The venture capital business in Britain is more advanced and bigger than that in other European countries, and is probably the biggest outside the United States.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Financial Secretary cannot get away with continually quoting the Peat Marwick report, which considered only the BES's first year of operation. The Small Business Research Trust report, which was published last year, on the first five years of the scheme's operation revealed that profound changes had been made in its nature and scope since the Peat Marwick report.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated that I am about to deal with the report of the Small Business Research Trust.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The Financial Secretary said that without tax relief those investments would not have been made. Given that this is a tax-cutting Government and given their dedication to the market and popular capital, why was it necessary to have additional tax relief? Why did not entrepreneurs invest anyway?

5 pm

Mr. Lamont: For many years, institutions have been geared to stock market investment. Britain has been hampered by a lack of development institutions investing directly in unquoted companies. Although we have a highly developed capital market for large business, the fact that the capital market has not functioned quite so well for small and unquoted businesses has been recognised as a long-standing problem.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred to a number of comments made by the Small Business Research Trust. It said that the BES had produced more investment in the south-east. That may be regrettable, but it is hardly surprising, because the report states that there are more entrepreneurs and industry in the south. A common feature of national tax allowances is that take-up is greatest in the south-east. The limit on the size of investment to £500,000 that we made last year may, in the long term, spread investment more widely. The assured tenancy is already spreading interest more widely. The hon. Gentleman is not in favour of the extension of the BES to assured tenancies, but—perhaps to a surprising degree—it is producing much interest in property investment not only in the south-east but in the north and Scotland. There have been many BES schemes for housing in the regions and Scotland.

The other point that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury made about the Small Business Research Trust report was the cost per job of the BES. The BES is not, and was never intended to be, a regional or employment aid. It is designed to encourage entrepreneurship and investment in small companies.

Last year, when we made changes to the assured tenancy and introduced the £500,000 cap, some people predicted that, taken together, the two measures would effectively mean the end of the BES as a source of equity finance for non-assured tenancy companies. It was thought that they would swamp the BES, but that has not happened. Preliminary figures show that over £50 million was raised by BES trading companies. Of course, a considerable amount of that has gone into assured tenancies—and we are pleased about that—but £50 million is a lot of money when one bears in mind that it has been invested in projects with an investment limit of £500,000.

Interestingly, the latest figures show that investment in projects of £500,000 and less has held up extraordinarily

well and is higher than two years ago, which is an encouraging development. As my hon. Friends will recall, we made that change because we thought that the purpose of this tax relief should be to concentrate help on the smallest companies. To a considerable extent, the signs are that that is beginning to happen.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my hon. Friend accept, from a practitioner who has started new compnies under the BES and been involved in companies that would not have started without it, that it has been a major success? It has helped many companies get going for the first time that would not otherwise have done so. It has helped many young people to get into business who would have been unable to do so because they did not have a track record.

Does my hon. Friend accept—he mentioned this during consideration of the Finance Bill in Committee last year—that the £500,000 limit needs to be kept under constant review so that it can be improved to enable more people to put more money into high-risk companies?

Mr. Lamont: We shall keep the £500,000 cap under review. We made many changes to the BES last year and therefore wanted it to settle down a bit. One of the criticisms that have been made of us, which is quite telling, is that we have made an awful lot of changes. There is something to be said for letting the scheme settle down. My hon. Friend rightly said that the £500,000 cap must be judged not only against the size of a business and inflation but against the costs of making a prospectus issue, which is the point that my hon. Friend had in mind.

We estimate that in 1988-89 about £400 million was raised for the scheme, a large part of which was invested in private renting, which has built up more rapidly than we forecast. It is too soon to know how much was raised privately for assured tenancies, but the signs are that many schemes were set up by small groups of individuals. The money will go to a wide variety of properties over a wide geographical spread. The precise number of dwellings provided depends on the price paid, but it could easily be in excess of 6,000. The first BES rented homes are available, so the benefits of the policy are already being felt.

The reason for such tax relief is similar to the answer to the question asked by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about encouraging people to invest in small companies—to alter attitudes and investing habits. For decades, there has been a hostile climate to investment in privately rented property, which is why we introduced this relief. We are pleased that it has been dramatically successful.

One development that has not been so welcome, which leads me to the proposed change, is that a substantial proportion of the money raised this year was invested in public offers that made use of close controlled companies. Under existing law, an individual can obtain tax relief on the interest paid on loans taken out by shares in a close company. Interest relief is important to help close companies, which are often small family concerns, raise money for growth. Previously, the relief was available even if shares qualified for tax relief under the BES. The combination of tax relief on the investment and the interest is excessive. The schemes that were being marketed were not small family businesses for which interest relief was justified but artificial arrangements. A degree of ingenuity was used to create the schemes, but they were artificial. I agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury that this relief is excessive, which is why we have decided to end it.

Amendment No. 4 goes further and removes interest relief for shares acquired on or after 15 March. The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to hear that I do not think that that could be justified. I may object to the success of tax relief, but there is no doubt that the people who framed the schemes acted within the law. The development of and rush of money into this device occurred in the last couple of months of the financial year. It was good of the hon. Gentleman to write to us on 3 March, but it was only about a week later that we chose to act. The provision would have been retrospective if we had brought it in before the end of the financial year. I do not think that that could have been justified.

The hon. Gentleman has said that there are cases in which retrospection can be justified. Those cases are rare and in tax matters, the only circumstance in which retrospection can be justified is where it remedies a technical defect so that the law is altered retrospectively to what everyone thought it was. Occasionally, there have been such alterations in tax law. However, one cannot penalise individuals who have made investments and commercial decisions on the basis of existing law. It is up to Parliament to ensure that the law is right and that is why we propose to alter the relief, which is excessive—as the Opposition say.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Financial Secretary made an interesting point when he said that retrospection appeared to be sensible only when it was a matter of altering the law to be what everyone thought it was. He has already admitted that it was only through the ingenuity of certain individuals and financial houses that the close companies route was discovered last year. It was only in the last couple of months before the Budget that there was a sudden marketing of that route as an option. Are those not precisely the circumstances that the Financial Secretary has said would justify retrospective legislation?

Mr. Lamont: No. The people who used the scheme were quite clear about the law and felt that they were using the law in a legitimate way—as they were. But the tax relief available was excessive. That was a new phenomenon. The hon. Gentleman said that he had spotted it, although he did not write to us until 3 March. It was very much a rush of money in the last two or three months before the Budget. I should point out that the tax loss was about £5 million a year, but I do not think that the principle can be compromised by the amount of money, because the principle itself is important. That is why I cannot accept the Opposition amendment, although we favour the ending of this excessive relief.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I share the Minister's view in one particular. I do not think that it would be right to accept a retrospective amendment. I agree with hon. Members of both parties who have spoken so far that——

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): A typical Liberal.

Mr. Beith: It is typically Liberal. I do not know why it should be thought funny or undesirable that all members of the Committee should agree. Many people outside the House would find their lives easier if all hon. Members

[Mr. Beith]

could agree on more matters. On matters of tax law, people would find their lives simpler if we could reach a reasonable degree of agreement.

It is agreed generally that the ability to take advantage of close company tax relief and the business expansion scheme tax relief at the same time provides an unacceptable degree of tax relief. It is not odd that we all agree on that. However, the difference between us on retrospection is important. As a typical Liberal, I believe in the rule of law, that people should be able to know what the law is and that they should not be penalised if they abided by the law as it was at the time. I know that that is not the view of the Labour party and that if there were a Labour Government, they might wish to legislate retrospectively on a variety of matters. Clearly, the Labour party believes that retrospection is undesirable, but I take a stronger stand against it.

Let us consider the Secretary of State for the Environment. If we were to accept the proposition that we should all be happy that the law was changed if it turned out not to be what the Government thought it was, the Secretary of State for the Environment would be here day after day because he is always getting the law wrong—as he has this week. He would constantly wish to indemnify himself by retrospective legislation. The Financial Secretary went too far when he said that it seemed reasonable to have retrospective legislation when it was a question of what people thought the law was at the time. The law is what it says. It may be that no one noticed that the close company provisions could be tied up with the business expansion scheme, but that was within the law. If the Inland Revenue had looked it up in its books, it would have been found to be the law. The final judgment would be for the courts, but the Revenue would have had to accept that that was the law and that it simply had not noticed what it was. The proposition for retrospective legislation to bring the law back to what people thought it was is dangerous and I hope that the Financial Secretary will revise his form of words in future speeches. I cannot support the Labour amendment, although I share the objection to the abuse.

5.15 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: I must make myself clear. The form of words I used was that the only examples I could think of where retrospection had been used in recent years in tax law were of the kind I described. I would, of course, in no way advocate retrospection that had an adverse effect on individuals.

Mr. Beith: There is an interesting example of retrospection going through the House at present, which is the Police Officers (Central Services) Bill, which contains retrospective provisions deeming the law some years ago to have been what it is now and which have been included because they are thought to be to the benefit of individuals. Retrospection is dangerous territory and we are right to keep out of it until there are overwhelming reasons for it, which are rare.

I do not share the Labour party's general hostility to the principles behind the business expansion scheme. There are many things wrong with it, but it is highly desirable that we should encourage more direct investment in industry and business, that we should widen the range of shareholders and that we should widen the sources from which venture capital can come to help small businesses in particular. The scheme has had a number of serious shortcomings, although none of them seems to add up to a reason not to persist in trying to bring its advantages to those for whom it was originally intended.

I hope that the Government will accept that there are a number of loopholes apart from the one with which they have dealt. One has been mentioned already, which is the unsatisfactory aspect of the use of the business expansion scheme for assured tenancies. It would be open to a company whose main business activity was to acquire rented property and rent it out under the business expansion scheme to put up the rents after five years to such a grotesque extent that no tenant would wish to remain. By that means, the company could acquire properties quickly and dispose of them, thus defeating the Government's objective for the scheme to be a means of attracting venture capital into privately rented housing.

Again, I have a different approach from some Labour Members. It is desirable to attract more capital to rented housing because there is a great shortage of it. There are several ways in which we could deal with that shortage. More public housing could be provided—I object to the Government's great restriction on the provision of publicly rented housing—but the private sector has a part to play. The rules of the business expansion scheme provide insufficient protection and that is why I tabled amendment No. 6, whose purpose is to ensure that the business expansion scheme relief will not go to landlords whose assured tenancy provisions include an opportunity for a rent review at the end of five years, taking rents above the market level. I hope that the Financial Secretary will look more carefully at that aspect of the business expansion scheme.

It would also be desirable for the Financial Secretary and his colleagues to look at other ways of making the scheme attractive to non-property companies. Although there is merit in expanding the rented housing sector, it is so much more attractive an investment, because it combines the reliefs with the tangible assets of property, that the purpose of the scheme—to bring venture capital to risk areas of manufacturing industry—is likely to be wholly defeated. The capacity of the business expansion scheme to attract new capital will be largely used up in the area where the risks are least and the potential gains are greatest. The Minister should recognise that and do something about it.

We suggest that the rate of tax relief on schemes involving property should not be as high as that on the rest of the business expansion scheme. At the moment, the scheme is heavily tilted towards property investment.

As was spelt out clearly in an article in the *Financial Times*, the scheme is still not working to the benefit of the regions in which there is a serious need for venture capital for new businesses—particularly areas such as the north of England. It is noticeable that, even with a £500,000 limit, the south-east has almost 50 per cent. of the qualifying investments, and some of the capital for those investments comes from the very regions where it is most needed.

One of the failings of our economy is that we still do not seem to be able to relate capital generated in deprived regions to investment in an expansion of those regions. Some of the regions with the most serious economic problems—the north of England, Scotland and Wales—have a strong tradition of savings; a degree of capital is

maintained by the thrifty and careful. An obvious illustration of that is the power and strength of the Trustee Savings bank in Scotland, which testifies to the willingness of the Scottish people to save.

We have somehow failed to match savings and investment in business in the regions where it is most needed. The business expansion scheme should be the vehicle for that purpose, but it is not yet meeting the needs.

I hope that the Minister will consider ways of making the business expansion scheme more effective and less heavily tilted towards investment in property. If he does not do that, it will cease to fulfil its most important purpose. Having said that, I must advise my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends to oppose amendment No. 4 because it would yet again introduce retrospective legislation.

Mr. Battle: We are entitled to ask for a clear and detailed statement of the evidence of the impact of the business expansion scheme, and what contribution it is making to the economic restructuring that we all know is taking place. Is it contributing to geographically unequal and uneven economic development? The Financial Secretary said that the scheme was not an aid to tackle unemployment or an instrument of regional aid. That being so, where is the investment going and what sort of businesses are being invested in? To use a word that the Government regularly use, where is the targeting in this instrument of intervention?

The business expansion scheme is beginning to expose not only the Govenment's total lack of regional policy but the fact that the only instrument of intervention that they are prepared to use is tax relief that is indiscriminate except that it goes to those with the most means. It is ironic that the only form of intervention that the Government will make in their free market experiment is by means of tax relief to those who do not need it.

Where is the detailed evidence of the effects of the business expansion scheme? I seem to remember that the Government were very concerned about the spending of public money locally when it came to another instrument of intervention—urban policy and the urban programme. Let me give an example from my own city of Leeds, where the urban programme money accounted for 1 per cent. of the council's budget, or £4 million a year. Yet two years ago the city council, the voluntary bodies and the private sector bodies which took funds in partnership from the urban programme were required to fill in forms to spell out precisely how every penny of that money had been spent. I am inclined to ask the Financial Secretary to provide us with a similar annual monitoring report on the business expansion scheme. As tax relief, the money comes from the Treasury; it is public money and we ought to be able to ask that it be accounted for.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that the research done at Southampton university and at the university of Ulster at Jordanstown shows not that the scheme has proved to be a neutral or indiscriminate form of intervention but that it has reinforced the existing social and economic divisions in our society. It has acted as a bulwark in building those divisions into our economic structure. In other words, the BES is worsening the north-south divide in Britain, which seems to be the opposite of the Government's declared intention.

There is a drift from north to south in equity investment raised under the business expansion scheme, and the researchers at Southampton are reported as having said:

> "In terms of its geographical impact, the BES is reinforcing the economic advantages of southern England and discriminating against the economically-lagging regions of northern Britain."

Apparently, the research shows

> "a difference in the type and quality of investments, with more 'sunrise' and service-based investments in the south-east compared with more of the older type of manufacturing investments in the north. The scheme is not therefore helping the north to restructure and widen its industrial base".

At the turn of the century, Leeds was a city of 5,500 firms. It was not dominated by one industry or one company. It was built of medium-sized and small family firms spread across the manufacturing sector—in textiles, engineering and in printing in particular. With the restructuring of the economy that has occurred during the past 20 years, many of those manufacturing firms have been taken over or rescheduled—"rationalised", as the phrase went. Jobs have been lost and plants and factories closed.

With the decline of the manufacturing sector, there has been a clear shift to the service sector. Although there was an expansion of the public service sector in the 1970s, more recently it is the financial services sector that has expanded and developed. That has done nothing to tackle the unemployment that has resulted from the decline of the manufacturing base in cities such as Leeds. Jobs are supposed to have been "recreated" in the service sector. In the 1970s, 17,500 jobs in manufacturing were lost in Leeds and in the same decade, 17,500 new jobs became available in the service sector. The difficulty was, that many of the new jobs were temporary part-time jobs, and even lower-paid than the jobs in manufacturing had been.

Such developments have not helped to strengthen and regenerate the economy. Instead, they have built on the divisions and contributed to the continued existence of classic low-wage economies such as that of West Yorkshire. They have done nothing to take such regions up to the wealth of the M4 belt, for example. It is interesting to consider whether the business expansion scheme has had anything like the impact in Yorkshire that it has had on the M4 belt between Reading and London, which is now one of the wealthiest areas in Europe. That is the real question that the Government have to answer. Is the scheme being targeted? Is it merely reinforcing economic divisions? Is it contributing to growth throughout the economy and for all those in Britain, or is it only of benefit to a few in the south east who latch on to it?

A second aspect of the role of the BES should be monitored. We should consider carefully the measure in last year's Budget, under which the Chancellor applied the relief to the acquisition and management of private rented sector property under the assured tenancy scheme.

I served on the Committee on the Bill that became the Housing Act 1988. I see that the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) has left the Chamber. He seemed to suggest that there was no evidence that the scheme was being misused. We resisted the introduction of the scheme at that time because, while we were discussing the Housing Bill in Committee, at the very same time as the Budget was being presented, we were discussing the fact that a landlord in the City of London was being taken to court

[Mr. Battle]

by Chelsea and Kensington council because of the way in which he treated tenants in his properties. That landlord is Mr. Nicholas Hoogstraten.

There was a long trial because it was felt that the way in which he treated his tenants was totally unacceptable. The then Minister with responsibility for housing, who has moved on to the Foreign Office for his efforts, regularly used the phrase in Committee that there should be social, good landlords who do not give people the conditions that that man expected his tenants to live in. All were expecting the outcome of the trial to be that that man would be found guilty for keeping tenants in conditions that they should not be in.

5.30 pm

What was the outcome? Because that man did not have his name on the rent book and used close company structures—he had so many companies set up that the authorities could not catch him under company law—he got away with offences under the housing law. We should pay attention to where the business expansion scheme is being applied. That same person declared on the television that he welcomed the business expansion scheme as a means of extending his property empire. I should be interested to receive a report from the Department spelling out whether parts of that empire have applied for and received money from the business expansion scheme. Clearly, it would be a demonstration that the money is not going to the kinds of people whom even Conservative Members believe should manage housing.

Mr. Chris Smith: My hon. Friend is making a powerful point. However, does he agree that the very nature of the business expansion scheme, involving a tax-free capital gain at the end of five years, will put a powerful momentum into the system to discourage landlords from being good, social landlords and encourage them instead to maximise their profit?

Mr. Battle: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. During the debate on the Finance Bill last year, it became clear that the Government's intention was to give the kind of tax concession that my hon. Friend has outlined. It was only then that the real and genuine intentions of the Housing Act were revealed. Throughout the debate, we argued that the Housing Act 1988 was clearly a landlord and property charter. It had nothing to do with giving tenants rights and improving the stock of housing or tackling homelessness. It was about pushing the market place in terms of the provision of housing.

We must examine the concessions that are given under the Treasury's arrangements and the statements that were made in Committee about housing conditions and the need to enable landlords to have more power over their tenants. The Government were nervous simply to let the market rip in terms of being able to treat tenants as they wished. It is worth reminding hon. Members that tenants' rights were significantly eroded under the legislation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury mentioned, schedule 2 altered the grounds on which a landlord could winkle out tenants. The two grounds were redevelopment and the non-payment of rent.

Despite the fact that a person's rent may not have been paid on time because he was on housing benefit and the money had to be claimed through the local authority and from the Department, as it stands now, the law says that the landlord can mandatorily evict the tenant and repossess the dwelling. The tenant has lost the right to go to court to appeal and state why he could not pay his rent. Similarly, if a landlord wants to redevelop the property, he must serve notice on the tenant and the tenant must leave, without a right of appeal to ask where they should go. As my hon. Friend suggested the conditions exist for landlords simply to take a tax handout and make a profit on property at the expense of tenants and under the guise of providing housing for the people.

It is incumbent on the Government now to tell us clearly how the close company structure will be used. Will it be, as the Minister said, that the business expansion scheme will be exploited by small groups of individuals? Where is the language of the previous Minister with responsibility for housing, that only those with a track record in tenant management should be allowed to be landlords? That language seems to have disappeared. People can use the business expansion scheme as a means of becoming a landlord.

Is the Minister checking who is receiving the money? Is he checking whether a monitoring report will be plainly published and available to all, so that the money that is spent from the tax system and given in handouts to people to provide money is clearly and publicly accounted for? If not, the Government have no excuse. They can say, "We must welcome the business expansion scheme as a means of intervening in the economy," but we want clear evidence that the intervention is appropriate and that it does something about the uneven and equal development of our economy. We need an assurance that, if it is the Government's intention to free the private sector to provide rented housing for people, it is not simply a cover for people to speculate with and make money from property that they prefer to be kept empty, rather than have people living in conditions that are suitable for the late 20th century in Britain and at a rent that they can afford. If the Minister cannot tell us that he can provide a publicly available monitoring report, there is unfair discrimination going on.

When it comes to local authorities spending public money and budgeting and implementing schemes such as the urban programme, they are expected publicly to account for every penny in a record that is sent to Marsham street. Every tree that is planted under the urban programme is accounted for, and every journey that is made by a mini bus to take elderly people to and from luncheon clubs is accounted for. I do not object to such amounts being accounted for, but I demand parity of treatment of public money as a whole. It will be incumbent upon the Treasury to publish the report and tell us where the business expansion scheme money is going. The Financial Secretary has suggested that, so far, the evidence is conflicting. It would not be too difficult for him to use his civil servants to find out where the money is going and make the details available to all.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I have no objection to the business expansion scheme. It seems to be a good idea, especially when we often lack mechanisms for regional aid for areas such as mine. As the Financial Secretary stated, it has a proper, educative role to play in the business community. I have no quarrel with legislating for education of any sort, as long as it is progressive education. Constituencies such as mine have long needed

an expansion of small businesses. They have needed injections of what the Financial Secretary referred to as venture captial to help to diversify our manufacturing and service base. However, I am afraid that the tax relief which should have been focused on small companies as a result of the provision of the business expansion scheme, does not appear to my constituents to be applied precisely to those companies and businesses which could have helped diversification.

The amendment would rectify abuses of tax relief and shift the focus of relief back to those areas for which it was designed in the first place. If the educative role to which the Financial Secretary referred is to function properly, it must begin to show more equitable results in terms of the geographical spread of the investment. I do not fully understand why the regional disparities which have already been referred to should exist. I trust that the Financial Secretary is not employing any kind of genetic basis to his argument about why the take-up should be greater in the south-east than, for example, Scotland or the north of England?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): One reason is that there are more people in the south-east.

Dr. Howells: Let me modify that and say that proportionately the take-up is not so great.

The object must be to close the loopholes which appear to be preventing the business expansion scheme from fulfilling the aims for which it was first designed. I fully appreciate that the business risk will continue to be greater in areas on the so-called periphery of the British economy —for example, in coalfields—where there continue to be declining staple industries. We hope that the scheme will work to rectify that situation.

The business expansion scheme should be, and could still be, a boon, although not a great boon, to constituencies such as mine. However, I am afraid that it is not viewed in that way in my constituency. I am afraid that it is seen as another way of massaging the profits of those concerns and businesses in the south-east that do not fall into the original categories for which the BES was designed.

My constituency would like the BES to help push it even further along the road of the remarkable transformation that it has already experienced during and since the decline of its basic industries.

I believe that the BES should help to revive that spirit of innovation—often a small but vigorous spirit of innovation—that makes a reality in terms of new products and jobs of the brave title, "venture capital". The amendment serves to remind us of the original purpose and would bring some discipline back into the business expansion scheme, which would be most welcome in constituencies such as mine.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I intend to speak briefly on the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I shall be echoing some of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) spoke with considerable expertise, having served on the Committee that considered the Housing Bill, which created the assured tenancies, and which, in turn, was one of the reasons that the business expansion scheme has proved to be a boon. My hon. Friend was also involved in housing matters in Leeds prior to becoming a Member of Parliament. I believe that my hon. Friend made important points that the Financial Secretary should consider. Even if he does not respond to them today, they are worth considering in depth. The Department of the Environment should also consider some of the implications of my hon. Friend's comments.

I, too, have some fears that some of the Government's assurances at the time that the Housing Bill was going through Parliament last year have not been fulfilled under the business expansion scheme, and that the scheme has been used in a way that was not anticipated.

I recognise that the amendment seeks to change the effective date of the blocking of a loophole. We all recognise that the Government have acted correctly, as it would have been completely wrong to allow people to get a tax concession on their investment and to receive additional tax relief if they were borrowing money to invest. The debate today is about whether the blocking of the loophole should be backdated for 12 months. One must remember that, when there is such an investment in property, a capital growth is almost assured. There has been continued capital growth in housing property over many years. In such a scheme, the investor would make a considerable amount of money.

5.45 pm

I am not completely opposed to the principle of the business expansion scheme, because it has some welcome features. I have recognised for many years that one of our failings is that we make it extremely difficult for venture capital to be invested. At times our actions militate against venture capital. This scheme goes part of the way towards rectifying that. One of the problems of getting investment, for example, into industry is that we fail to take long-term investment views in the same way as our competitors in other countries, especially those in Germany. It is regrettable that to some extent our financial institutions militate against that.

We want to see investment in our areas, so it is important that we have a scheme such as the BES. However, we want investment in sectors that will create jobs and will help to rectify the balance of payments situation. We should get our manufacturing industries on to a better basis. It is appalling that we still import so much more than we export. After all, at the end of the day, this nation's bread and butter depends on its manufacturing industries.

Investing in assured tenancies by means of the business expansion scheme, which appears to be the main issue emerging in the debate, does not create jobs in the way in which we would wish. Of course, last year a £500,000 limit was introduced on the business expansion scheme, but there was an extension to £5 million for property. One could have argued that it was wrong to do that. One must of course ensure that the system is not abused and money wrongly made by receiving tax concessions. The least worthy cause was allowing people to invest in the private rented sector. Some of us fear that, perhaps, the Government, with their determination and obsession for creating a private rented sector, have had to consider means whereby people can put money into it.

I was surprised that in my constituency the business expansion scheme and the Housing Act 1988 have been used. We have surplus housing stock in Burnley of some 6 per cent., both in the private and public sectors. There are

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

semi-detached houses on council estates and private houses standing empty because of the declining population. I was surprised that a company was buying every property initially under £10,000, then £20,000 and now up to £30,000. To many hon. Members those figures will appear surprising, but in an area such as mine a house costing £30,000 is expensive. That company, Northern Renewals, is buying those houses and then improving them. I do not criticise it, because the agents involved, Ingham and Bulcock, are a reputable company. I shall be meeting them in a week's time to discuss their plans. I am criticising the Government for making that scheme available, because I do not believe it is needed.

I recognise that the company must make management judgments. I believe, however, that it may have made a wrong judgment, because it is difficult to believe that it will find the tenants for those houses. I recognise, however—the Government will say this—that it will stop some houses becoming derelict and it will ensure that work is carried out on those old stone-built terrace houses and stop them declining. If that happens, I shall welcome it.

However, instead of the tax concession being used in that way, I would prefer it to be used to give money for grants to enable people to buy such houses and to improve them. Many people do not buy such houses because of the non-availability of improvement or repair grants with which to do them up.

Because of the laws of supply and demand, another problem that is caused when companies buy houses is that they increase demand, and that is bound to increase the price of houses and to reduce the housing stock available to younger married couples.

As the debate has made clear, there has been a considerable growth in and use of the business expansion scheme, especially in the past few months, and I am not surprised by that, because the growth has been the result of the enactment of the Housing Act 1988 which tied in with last year's Finance Bill. That has led to the surge of investment in this scheme to which the Financial Secretary referred. However, when he replies to the debate, the right hon. Gentleman must say whether he believes that that is what the Government want.

I can see the difficulty about whether the provision should be applied retrospectively. One could argue that point for some considerable time. I recognise that on other occasions we could be arguing equally well against retrospective legislation and that is the danger in advocating an amendment such as this.

However, even more important than the principle of the date is whether the Government really believe that there are any fundamental errors in the business expansion scheme. I am sincere in saying that I am not totally opposed to the scheme and recognise that it has some good points. Nevertheless, I should like it to be used to encourage venture capital and the growth of small manufacturing industries, jobs and employment. I had hoped that it could play a small part in improving our balance of payments and thus the country's financial position. The way in which it is being used for assured tenancies in conjunction with the Housing Act 1988 is not the best way forward.

Although it could be argued that those points are not directly related to the amendment, I hope that the Minister will recognise that they are important points which could have been argued in a stand part debate. I am glad that those important points have been put on the record and hope that the Financial Secretary will respond to them.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): As the outset it would be churlish not to say that I welcome clause 44 and the Government's attempt to put right a clear wrong in the working of the business expansion scheme, just as in the past they have put right other wrongs in other schemes, especially those relating to forestry and, in 1984, to agriculture.

On the surface, it seemed a perfectly good idea to raise capital for small businesses, to help to create employment and to reward enterprise through encouraging equity investment in what, by the Government's own definition, were higher risk organisations, and to help them, in turn, to acquire money for expansion without the severe loan charges that they would otherwise incur as a result of the Government's high interest rate policy. Therefore, in theory the business expansion scheme is consistent with a strong supply side macro-economic policy. However, problems arise and it is incumbent on us to point them out in the debate.

The cost has been high since tax relief on investment is given at the top rate. Obviously, since the top rate was reduced last year, that cost is less than formerly. However, the scheme has been costly, at over £100 million per year in recent years. It has been used as a tax shelter and for tax avoidance whereas the original intent was to reward and facilitate enterprise. The scheme has been widely abused in speculative building, a sector that is concentrated largely in London and the south-east. Therefore, the scheme has been concentrated on the sector of the economy that is most hurt at present by the supply side constraints and the capacity constraints that we have experienced and which are evident in our current account deficit of over £2 billion last year in materials related to construction. The construction sector is the worst hit sector, and the worst hit area of that worst hit sector is where the money and investment have principally been concentrated in the past year. Therefore, there is a wide distortion in the market and an accentuated drift of investment from Scotland and the north towards London and the south-east.

Because the money has been used largely for speculative building, it is incumbent on the Financial Secretary to try to tell us that this is the best way to invest in house construction and that it is the most cost-effective way of using public money—that is what it amounts to, because of the subsidy that is given. I do not believe that it is the best way. If a similar sum had been invested in the public sector, I believe that we should have seen a far greater return for our money, and housing far more appropriate to the needs of those who are without it at present. That in turn would have served to reduce the capacity constraints that are arising in the south-east.

All that underlines the fact that a poorly directed supply side policy is a danger not a benefit to our economy. The Government are reaping the harvest of their own somewhat narrow definition of supply side policies.

I have referred to the labour and housing shortages in London and the south-east that are a direct result of such policies and to the capacity constraints that are leading to excess imports. At a time when there is a surplus of labour and skills in the north-east and Scotland, surely a proper effective supply side policy would concentrate on the

whole economy; as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has said, that requires a strong regional policy. However, it also requires investment in other aspects of the supply side, especially in training. We must redress the skills shortages that our economy is now facing and encourage more young people to stay on at school and to go on into higher and further education. We must not forget that we have the lowest levels of participation in higher and further education in western Europe—and that, again, is hurting our economy.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Yes, lower than in South Korea.

Dr. Moonie: Yes, we must always remember that labour is as important as capital in supply side economics. The Government are finding that out only too clearly as industrial unrest rises in the economy and as the former surplus of labour is eroded by demographic change.

Much of the United Kingdom is still suffering from under-investment, for example, in our infrastructure. That can be seen most clearly in my own area of Scotland where we have a great need for roads and for a motorway from Leeds to Edinburgh and from Carlisle to Glasgow. We need better intercontinental air links for Scotland and the north-east of England, and electrification of the north-east line, not only to Edinburgh as intended, but further north to Aberdeen and Inverness.

An effective supply side policy requires proper regional development otherwise the shortage of capacity and the overheating in the south-east, which is slowing down the movement of people and goods, which London is now experiencing, and which has been mentioned by many manufacturers as a key element in their rising costs, will rapidly worsen until London will start to choke to death under the burden of its own population and enterprise. That is the real challenge to the Government on the supply side which, to date, the business expansion scheme has failed to address.

The Financial Secretary said that in the past the Opposition have been inconsistent and that we now appear to criticise a scheme that we formerly supported. There is no inconsistency. It was right to support what was, after all, the only limited measure of help that was being given to help industry to expand. If it is a question of take it or leave it, thanks very much, we will take it. However, surely it is also right for us to conduct a proper critical analysis of what has happened as a result of the implementation of the policy. We must point to deficiencies in their policy and ask the Government to come forward with some means of redressing them.

The principle was not unsound. It was supported by people such as myself when I was in local government before I came to this place. When I was one of the trustees of our pension fund in Fife regional council, I supported its investment in venture capital schemes. The only money going into venture capital schemes in Scotland at that time came from local authorities. It certainly did not come from the private sector. We welcomed this as a principle and a means of perhaps enticing more money into valuable areas. Unfortunately, it has turned out to be a shyster's charter and a home for fast buck merchants that bedevils our economy.

6 pm

Yesterday, in another debate, I criticised the principle of widening tax rates on income. I still believe that this scheme has produced more problems than it has solved, as has the scheme about which I talked yesterday. It needs to be modified, if not abolished. It is a warning to us to be careful when we try to influence market decisions in this manner.

I have welcomed clause 44 and I also support the amendment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I do so for one simple reason. I believe that a genuine mistake was made and that the Government's intention was to ensure that the scheme had its present and not its past form. It is wrong that people should be allowed to profit doubly from a mistake such as this. Although I would not normally support retrospective legislation, there are reasonable grounds for us to do so tonight.

Mr. Morgan: The Opposition are trying to put over the fact that we have sought to give the business expansion scheme a fair trial. We are expressing on behalf of the communities that we represent—Leeds, Kirkcaldy, Pontypridd and Cardiff——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): And Wolverhampton.

Mr. Morgan: I am talking only about my hon. Friends who have spoken. We have given the business expansion scheme a fair trial, but have had to draw a sorry conclusion about it.

There are Conservative Members present, although not many seem to want to speak. That could be for two possible reasons: first, that there is a news blackout on "Today in Parliament" and secondly, that they are deeply ashamed of the performance of the business expansion scheme because they know that it has not achieved what it was cracked up to do.

The Financial Secretary was good enough to agree that when the business expansion scheme was first introduced, the Leader of the Opposition welcomed it. Certainly, when I came to the House I said that I had been a fan of the scheme. Many others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) also said that they wanted the business expansion scheme to be given a fair trial. The scheme was supposed to encourage people to take risks with their money in a way that would contribute to the expansion of enterprise in this country and, therefore, to the expansion of jobs and the correction of our chronic balance of payments deficit.

The Financial Secretary also said that he thought that the business expansion scheme had been part of the amazing resurgence of venture capital industry in this country. He boasted that we had a venture capital industry that was bigger than that of any other European country and second only to the United States of America. He completely misunderstands what the business expansion scheme was originally cracked up to do and the difference between venture capital and seed capital.

The business expansion scheme is not about venture capital. The companies involved in it are far too small and young. By and large, the gap that the business expansion scheme was supposed to fill was the seed capital gap and not the venture capital gap. The scheme was supposed to say to people, "Would you like to put your money at risk? You could lose the lot or make a lot of money. This is not

[Mr. Morgan]

a safe investment, and if you want a safe investment you should put your money in the Post Office. This is a high risk investment." High-risk investment is for companies that either do not yet have products to market, or that have just got a product to the market place that still needs an enormous amount of working capital spent on it to market it properly so that it is capable of being sold overseas, not merely within the company's home town or region.

These are not the sort of industries that have been funded by the business expansion scheme. The scheme should be a million miles away from putting money into old people's homes, private cleaning and contracting companies and other enterprises that are largely asset based. It should be a million miles, if not light years, away from putting money into the provision of private residential accommodation under the assured tenancy scheme.

This is one of the failures of the scheme and I hope that the Minister will address that problem when he returns to the Dispatch Box. If the scheme was supposed to involve venture capital, surely, there has been a complete misunderstanding. We should have been talking about high-risk, high-growth companies, which could be funded and from which the investor's money could either be returned 10 times over at the end of five or seven years, or he could lose the large bulk of it, if not the lot. Such companies have not benefited from the scheme.

We have to educate the Financial Secretary about the regions. He has failed to understand our point about venture and seed capital. He has also failed to understand our point about regional drift. He does not have the facts straight in his head about this country's geography. When asked why more than 50 per cent. of the schemes and more than 65 per cent. of the money had been invested in enterprises based in the south-east and East Anglia, which we considered to be one of the scheme's failings, he said that there was more business in those regions. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), he said that there were more people in those regions.

The Financial Secretary should listen to the facts about this country's geography. The number of people who live in the south-east and East Anglia totals about 19·5 million, which is almost one third—33 per cent.—of the country's population. The fact that 65 per cent. of the money is invested in the south-east and East Anglia, which is where 33 per cent. of the population live, creates a massive disparity of almost 100 per cent. between the regional share of this country's population in the south-east and East Anglia and the money invested there under the business expansion scheme. That is a massive failure of the scheme and it is no good his saying that there is more business in the south-east. That is palpably not true. There is no evidence to suggest that there are fewer new business formations or enterprises in the outer regions of the country than in the south-east and East Anglia. However, there is more capital in the south-east.

The fundamental problem with the business expansion scheme is that it is not attuned to where there is enterprise, to the needs of the risk taker, inventor or person willing to invest in a new business, but to the needs of capital. It is attuned to the needs of people with money in their pockets. They are told that they can double their money through the scheme, that they will not have to take any more risks than they want, and that the taxpayer will give them a bonus on top of that.

The regional disparity in this country is not simply that the south-east of England is a large region, although clearly it is. In fact, it is the biggest region. If East Anglia is thrown in, the south-east region contains one third of the population. Another disparity is the fact that it contains about 50 per cent. of the middle classes and 90 per cent. of the wealthy people. It is where, by and large, the millionaires live, apart from a few wealthy landowners who live in Scotland and the south-west. If a scheme is attuned to the needs of millionaires, and people interested in the tax breaks for higher rate tax payers, clearly those areas with more wealth will be where it operates most strongly. The scheme is not targeted on areas where there is more enterprise.

There is no evidence of less enterprise in Pontypridd, Kirkcaldy or Cardiff or in the outlying regions. The problem is that those places cannot get together with the owners of capital, because the owners do not live there. In the south-east, capital, is easily available because, historically, it has accumulated there for various reasons —it has agricultural wealth, the capital city is there, Parliament is there, and so on.

If the Government persist in misunderstanding the deeply risk-averse nature of British capitalism—the failure of the business expansion scheme to remedy it over the past five years is further evidence of that misunderstanding —they will never devise a set of policies that will close the trade gap and bring it back to parity and beyond; for we shall need surpluses in the 10 or 15 years after the deficits to pay off the colossal debt that we are now running up.

All Opposition Members were keen to see the BES have a fair trial. We are deeply disappointed by the way in which it has been pushed further in the direction of risk aversion rather than risk taking by the inclusion of residential property under the assured tenancy scheme. Now, even more than before, the BES has become a political gimmick. Last year it meant the Secretary of State for the Environment suddenly reflecting, when considering the Housing Act 1988, that he should not approach the next election without a single scheme having been put in place and with no private capital having flowed into assured tenancies. That would have made him look even more foolish than he usually looks when the courts declare his leaflets illegal. He wanted belts and braces to ensure that a couple of schemes—assured tenancy and private capital funded schemes—were brought forward, thinking that he would not pay for them himself but would get the British taxpayer to do so. Rather than depend on the willingness of British capital to put risk money into private rented property, he decided that, if it were given the extra bonus of a tax break on the top rate, British capital might get some schemes going.

Well, there may be some schemes, so the right hon. Gentleman will be able to claim that there are some at the next election. They cannot be compared on a fair and equal basis with schemes for developing new laser beams or new silicon chip factories that might produce products to sell to Japan or the United States. The BES projects are a straight tax break to ensure that the Secretary of State's few remaining shreds of political reputation can be held together respectably when it comes to writing the next

Tory election manifesto. The scheme always carried the risk of being a political gimmick and this has proved that more true than before.

We are now retrospectively trying to put close companies in order. The Government feared that financial manipulation was going on, and so it was. I welcomed the Financial Secretary's expression of horror at the way in which certain financial middlemen were abusing the scheme, but that is in the nature of the scheme—that is what it is all about. It is not filling the gap that it was meant to fill. It is not putting people into manufacturing industry. In America, a person starting a new silicon chip company can go to his local rotary club or masonic lodge and get people to give him a couple of thousand dollars each to help him get started, knowing that they can lose all the money. That does not happen here, and the BES does not fill that gap.

Instead, curiously, the scheme presents a free gift to a certain breed of financial middlemen who can sell safe little earners—this is supposed to be high-risk new venture capital, but it is proving the reverse. The middlemen promise to fix people up with nice little earners; all they have to do is answer the advertisement, tear off the coupon and a salesman in the latest sharkskin suit will call round to see them. I advise people to watch out for these salesmen.

I said in an earlier intervention that the scheme was providing packed lunches for sharks, but I forgot that I am deeply interested in marine wildlife. I should have said packed lunches for vultures—vulture capital, not venture capital.

The Minister must give serious consideration to the failure of British small businesses to take risks. He must understand that if the money from the tax break goes into residential property, DIY warehouses, old people's homes, and private caterers and contractors, which take over on a sweetheart basis from local authorities and hospitals, that will do nothing to solve our balance of payments. It will redouble all the economic difficulties from which the country has suffered and continues to suffer. We have a £15 billion balance of payments deficit, and this scheme in no way contributes to solving our severe economic problems.

6.15 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I support the amendment. The extension of the business expansion scheme to private rented accommodation under the assured tenancy arrangements is cruel and irrelevant. It is irrelevant because, as my hon. Friends have already said, the purpose of the scheme was to encourage risk investment and create jobs. It will create very few jobs. It is also irrelevant and cruel because of the effects it will have on the housing market and on people in housing need, especially in London and the south-east.

In London and the south-east, the private housing market has for many years been the prey of sharks, vultures and people such as Rachman. There is already a terrible problem in London; private landlords try to winkle out sitting tenants so that they can sell off flats and transform accommodation into assured tenancies. Now that private landlords receive a tax break to do up such accommodation, the financial pressure on them to get rid of private tenants will be even greater.

I know that the Minister takes no interest in these matters, but he has only to go half a mile down the road to Westminster, Bayswater, Pimlico or Maida Vale to see elderly sitting tenants who have lived all their lives in mansion blocks—many of them in marginal Conservative constituencies—living in fear and leading unhappy lives——

Mr. Morgan: Their Members of Parliament, too.

Ms. Abbott: Indeed. The Minister would not have to go far to find such people, or to find families being harassed by landlords who want to remove them so that they can transform the accommodation to assured tenancies. This tax break will provide an additional financial incentive for such harassment.

The growth of the assured tenancy sector to which this extension of the scheme will lead will make no practical contribution to the housing problems of London. These assured tenancies will be offered at prices way beyond the reach of the average person who works and lives in London. They will be offered to businesses, tourists and rich people who want a pied-à-terre in London. The tenancies do nothing to help the average family who want somewhere to live or the homeless. The scheme will only put money into the pockets of speculators and the heirs of Rachman. To bring it forward under the guise of encouraging enterprise and creating jobs is hypocritical, bogus, cruel and irrelevant, and I hope that even at this late stage the Government will see their way clear to withdrawing the idea.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I try each year to take an objective position in Budget debates. Over the years I have invariably supported the Government when I thought that they were right, and I have been open in my support; I have been critical when I have thought that they were wrong. Last year we had a debate on these matters. If I recall correctly, we were debating the possibility of abuse of assured tenancies where people might enter into arrangements with those who took out the tenancies over a period of five years and where the investor might have a direct pecuniary and, indeed, occupational interest later.

I persisted in raising the matter last year. If I recall correctly, my hon. Friends may have raised it in Committee upstairs. I persisted in the hope that this year the Minister might be able to report on how things had developed. I should like to know whether abuse has taken place or been reported to him. If it has not been reported, will he consider my original predictions about how the scheme might be abused and make a statement to the House during the debate that may take place on Report? There may not be much chance to discuss the matter in Committee upstairs, and I will not be on that Committee this year.

I want to speak more specifically to the whole question of the intellectual base on which the BES scheme was submitted originally to the House and argued by Ministers publicly. As I understand the Government's position, it is generally that Government need not intervene directly to create jobs, that they can reduce their commitment to regional policy and that, by a system of tax aids, individuals will be given the opportunity to take decisions and invest where, in other conditions and under other Governments, those decisions might be taken by Ministers or by civil servants in conjunction with industrialists.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

The premise is that as a substitute for a regional policy of state intervention we should rely on individuals to take decisions which will have the same effect in creating employment in the regions. Ministers will recall that I have supported aspects of the BES scheme over the years. I put it to the Minister today that the scheme is not working in the way that the Government originally hoped it would. They may feel that it has had some success, but a report on the Peat Marwick report of 1986 said:

"With the benefit of a longer time-period this report has also been able to reveal the high loss rates amongst fund investments made under the BES (over 50 per cent.) and in the early years of the BES (over one-quarter of investments made in 1983-84 and 22 per cent. of the capital invested in that year had been lost by late 1987). Overall, of the £175 million invested by funds and managed schemes in the seven years to April 1987, 17 per cent. had been lost by late 1987."

As I understand it, that report was fairly favourable to the scheme.

I cannot believe that the Government ever intended such losses on the scheme. That must indicate a deficiency in it. I cannot believe that the Government, if they were being reasonable on these matters, would have been so willing to support some of the schemes. Earlier, there were references to wine merchants and art dealers. I cannot believe that it was ever the intention of Ministers that such people should be involved. The scheme should have been geared far more to manufacturing industry.

The 1986 Peat Marwick report made a point about the regional base for investment. The document from which I am quoting said:

"Finally, the report highlights the significant regional inequalities in the impact of the scheme. The South East and East Anglia contain considerably more than their 'fair share' of BES investments relative to their shares of the total stock of UK businesses (51 per cent. of investments and 65 per cent. of the invested capital in the period 1983-84 to 1985-86 inclusive)."

The scheme has failed because of its emphasis on the south-east, although I accept that there are pockets of high unemployment in Kent, in some of the Medway towns. I recognise, as I am sure my hon. Friends do, that those problems need resolving. Indeed, Labour's case is that we would single out many of those areas and target them for special treatment. We would ensure that they are given the support that they need to develop.

In wealthy Kent and wealthy south-east England generally, those areas stand out as blots on the employment landscape. In some of them unemployment is as high as it is in Yorkshire and Lancashire. I am sure that the people in Kent, Surrey, Sussex and all those areas would accept that in the main they are affluent counties. Yet they are getting the lion's share of the BES investment. If Ministers want to substitute for a regional policy, by way of state intervention, schemes that are tax-based they must find a regional basis on which to give tax concessions.

I have had correspondence with Ministers who say that it is not possible to build into the tax system a regional basis for tax concessions. I do not subscribe to that. The Prime Minister may have done things that I do not like, but she has proved in many ways that things can be done when the will is there. If Ministers set out to find a way, I am sure that they could establish in finance law principles that would benefit areas of high unemployment through the tax system. In that climate and under that regime, Labour, without any sense of equivocation or adding any condition, would wholeheartedly support the scheme in the same way as I did when it was much narrower in its early days after its introduction in 1983-84.

There is work that can be done. It would be nice if the Minister, in reply to the debate, could say, "I have never conceded the case before but I will ask my officials to see whether it is possible somehow to incentivise regional investment through the tax system on the basis of a scheme akin to the principles laid down in the business expansion scheme." It might be geared to the manufacturing sector. The Government would not be compromising any principle. They would not be conceding the case for Government intervention in a way that might lead to an ideological backlash from Government supporters or that might offend the views set out in the Conservative campaign guide for the last election when they were preaching vigorously about the need for as little state intervention as possible. I am asking them to use what they accept are the weapons—no, the tools—that the state has at its disposal: that is, a tax system, in trying to drive a greater regional incentive into small business investment.

Another matter irritates me. I want to read to the House an advertisement. This is what discredits Government tax policy. The advertisement was put in by a firm called Johnson Fry Corporate Finance Limited. It is taken from *The Times* of the—the Economic Secretary smiles. Perhaps he will tell me why he does so or, after I have read this, whether he still feels like smiling.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): A sedentary smile.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is an original term.

The advertisement appeared in "*The Times*" of 25 February 1989. Its headline is:

"High earner pays no tax".

It goes on to say:

"Peter Fletcher is a successful entrepreneur who will earn £200,000 in this tax year. Last year, his tax bill was a frightening £105,000+. This year Peter will pay nothing at all. He is taking advantage of special tax concessions offered through Business Expansion Schemes (BES) and Enterprise Zone property investment"—

I am not condemning that; I am just drawing attention to the way in which such investment schemes can be abused and how that can anger people such as myself who see the mistreatment of millions of people in our society within tax law and the benefit system—

"which together will completely eliminate his tax liability."

6.30 pm

I supported the original enterprise zone proposal, as the Financial Secretary will recall. My efforts were rewarded with one in my constituency which has been a glowing success. I do not dissent from my original view, but, unfortunately, the whole scheme has gone over the top.

The advertisement goes on:

"What's more, he won't have to dig deep into his pockets to do this as all his investments are totally self-funding, through specially arranged bank loans."

I understand that, with the support of my hon. Friends, the Government are now closing that gap.

"Peter has invested £140,000 in Enterprise Zone property, £40,000 in BES and his remaining tax liability is mopped up by personal allowances and mortgage and pension tax relief."

No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) will be dealing with those

matters in Committee. I shall not be there to play my part on this occasion, but I am sure that my hon. Friend will make a good job and an effective case.

The advertisement continues:

"But good news for the Fletcher family doesn't stop here. Peter's brother Michael, who is 28"—

I presume, a yuppie Porsche man—

"works in the City and takes home"—

maybe not—

"£35,000 a year, has found that he too can eliminate his entire higher rate tax liability by investing in a Smaller Companies Assured Tenancy (SCAT) BES Scheme, with a 100 per cent. loan."

I understand that that is elegible for tax relief if it is done through a close company.

"Michael will receive tax relief on the interest"—

yes, he is doing it; it is coming out now—

"on his loan and, in five years' time, he will be able to sell his BES investment, which is not subject to Capital Gains Tax. Charles Fry, Chairman of Johnson Fry,"—

the corporate finance company whose advertisement I am now quoting—

"a company that specialises in BES and Enterprise Zone investment, comments 'All higher rate tax payers should be examining BES and Enterprise Zones very closely. The Assured Tenancy Scheme effectively enables investors to invest, at a 40 per cent. discount, in companies that buy and rent out residential property. This is the first year that this type of investment has been available. BES has a £40,000 limit per person, so the wealthier individual should also be looking at Enterprise Zone investment which enjoys full tax relief on approximately 95 per cent. of the investment.'"

I am slightly out of order, Sir Michael, but I shall go on.

"'One important point to stress, however, is that people should invest now before possible Budget changes. Why pay money to the taxman when you can utilise the same money (without any further capital outlay) to make good quality property investments instead?'"

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) will find those remarks offensive. She knows what will happen when such tenancies get off the ground. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) turns in his seat to grab my copy of the advertisement. I can tell him that I located it with great difficulty. However, having spent several hours doing so, it now features in every speech that I make wherever I go in the United Kingdom as an example of how tax law has got a little out of hand. It cannot be right for someone to offset a liability to tax on £200,000, taking allowances into account, by using such schemes.

All that I say to Ministers in my modest contribution today is that they should target this scheme more effectively. It should be geared more to genuine service trade and manufacturing industry and it should be limited, perhaps to a lower level than it is today, unless it applies to manufacturing industry in the regions. I am talking about regions or localities of high-level unemployment, depending on how one draws the line. One could almost support an amendment for a considerable extension of the scheme if it had a firm manufacturing regional base. I should be willing to support further and greater tax concessions if that were the case.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I had not intended to intervene and I apologise for not having been here at the start of the debate but I was attending the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. I want to ask one or two questions which I hope the Financial Secretary will answer. I apologise if he dealt with them when he opened the debate.

The Government have always been concerned to target help on those who need it most and where it can be most effective, whether it be in housing, industry or social security benefits. Therefore, can the Financial Secretary say how much money has gone to those areas where unemployment is higher than average through the business expansion scheme by way of tax relief, and so on? The Government should be able to do that by reference to travel-to-work areas in the United Kingdom. I should be interested to know whether the Government have any figures about the effectiveness of the business expansion scheme in areas of high unemployment and how that compares with the business expansion scheme in areas where the unemployment rate is below average.

Secondly, how effective has the business expansion scheme been in providing jobs in those sectors which contribute to British exports? It is obvious that, if the Government have two target areas in terms of trying to encourage enterprise and create jobs, they should be those areas where unemployment is highest and those sectors where a contribution can be made to taking on the immense balance of payments problem which the Chancellor's other policies have created.

I hope that the Financial Secretary will be able to give some information on those points and that he will consider a more radical reform of the business expansion scheme to take account of my questions.

Mr. Chris Smith: We have had a wide-ranging and lengthy debate about some of the major issues that lie behind the abuse with which the amendment seeks to deal. The debate has been characterised by the fact that, apart from the Financial Secretary, no Conservative Members have taken part. Clearly, they are not interested in the problems of the BES, in the tax abuse which the clause addresses, in the equity gap which exists or in the desperate need for more investment, especially in the manufacturing sector.

The only Conservative Back Bencher to intervene at all for most of the debate was the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who absented himself for much of the discussion, perhaps to conduct more research with his researcher into the net book agreement. He seemed to imply that he wished the Government to keep under review the £500,000 cap on non-property or shipping-based BES schemes. The Minister said that he would do so. I hope that he will not be tempted too far down that road, because the restriction to £500,000 was welcomed by the Opposition last year and we hope that it will be kept in place.

It is worth noting that the hon. Member for Dover, as he himself said, is an expert on the BES. Last year, when I checked on these matters, I discovered that he was a director of four BES-financed companies—City Gate Estates, Hoskins Brewery, Private Investor Publications and Palladian Estates—all four of them, I am sure, making a major contribution to the manufacturing needs of the nation. He was, in addition, a director of three further companies, all of which were involved in the raising of BES finance. Those were Sabrelance Ltd., Sabrelance Business Service Limited and South Cumbria and North Lancashire Management Limited. He is indeed an expert on the BES, and as a result he appears to be benefiting substantially.

I was disappointed that the Financial Secretary—as he did last year—trotted out the Peat Marwick report, which

[Mr. Chris Smith]

dealt only with the first year of operation of the BES. The favourable nature of that report must be modified in the light of further research, especially that done by the Small Business Research Trust, which saw major changes in the nature of BES investment from 1984 to 1988. The trust said in its report:

"the economic impact of the scheme is less favourable than suggested by Peat Marwick."

The Financial Secretary must not attempt to convince us that Peat Marwick is the whole picture: it is not. It shows the picture in the initial stages of the BES and not the subsequent development of the scheme.

Many of my hon. Friends have said that we are not opposed in principle to the idea of the BES. However, we object to the way in which the scheme is being used, and the close companies mechanism is the most obvious of the deficiencies in the way in which the BES has turned out since 1984.

6.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, for example, that the BES was not working in the way that had originally been hoped. My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that he was not totally opposed to the scheme in its conception and recognised the need to raise capital to close the equity gap. I agree with my hon. Friend in that approach. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) also said that the BES was a good idea.

The problem is that the reality does not match the principles with which the scheme was introduced, the reason being that it has become a device for sheltering high rate taxpayers' incomes. It has become distorted from the original intention of the BES, which was focused on the raising of capital for small-scale risk enterprise.

It has changed in nature. The primary purpose of the scheme now is tax avoidance rather than the raising of equity finance, and the problems that have flowed in train include the north-south flow of funds, the increasing emphasis on property and the increasing emphasis on asset-backed enterprise. The use of the close company device is a clear sign of the problems that come when a good idea turns sour and becomes used entirely for the purposes of tax avoidance.

The debate is primarily about an amendment which seeks to make the closing of the loophole retrospective for a year. Towards the end of his earlier remarks, the Minister—I fear that I must disagree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr Beith) on this—said that there had been occasions during the last 20 years when retrospective tax legislation had been regarded as worth introducing because the original situation that everyone had assumed to be the case had become distorted.

The use of the close companies device is such an instance. The Minister said that the private rented application of the BES had grown much more quickly than he had forecast this time last year. Indeed, the use of the close company device in the three months leading up to the Budget, specifically linked to the rented accommodation scheme, was not forecast at the time.

Nobody expected that that would happen and nobody realised—certainly not the Financial Secretary—that it could be used in that way. The ingenuity which some bright financial operators put into developing a device which gave not just the BES tax relief but, in addition, extra slices of tax relief to top rate taxpayers, should not be rewarded; it should be penalised retrospectively.

Let us remind ourselves of the exact nature of the abuse that we are debating. We are talking about a top rate taxpayer who can make a payment of interest over five years of £30,000, can get tax relief in return for that payment of interest of £28,000, making a total payment of only £2,000 in return for an investment worth £40,000. We are therefore referring to somebody who, by that means, makes a profit at the end of the day—tax-free, with no capital gains tax to be paid—of £24,000.

That is only a modest estimate of the increased value of the company's assets. A situation in which an individual can literally make money out of this country's taxpayers must be considered intolerable and be dealt with as severely as possible. That is why, in those special circumstances, we ask the Committee to close that tax loophole retrospectively. Unless the Financial Secretary is prepared to accept our amendment, I shall urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote in favour of it.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) observed, the Committee's debate has been very wide-ranging. In fact, the hon. Gentleman's comment is something of an understatement. It emerged from the debate that a number of Opposition Members have some kind things to say about the business expansion scheme. They include the hon. Members for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and, to some extent, the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). They all had words of praise for certain aspects of the scheme.

A number of Opposition Members wanted more detail about the scheme's effects, though at the beginning of the debate I outlined the information at my disposal about the direction of the scheme, about the proportion of it devoted to small businesses having a turnover of less than £500,000, and about assured tenancies—and I gave a general report on the scheme's progress.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West made an interesting speech in which he compared some people with sharks but then withdrew that remark because he rather likes sharks. I was then dismayed that he made a comparison with vultures because I rather like vultures. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I spent most of my summer in Crete watching them, and I hope to return to see more of them. I would have preferred the hon. Gentleman to stick to his original metaphor.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West drew a useful and valid distinction between seed capital and venture capital. He will recall that the business expansion scheme began as a start-up incentive, but the development of the venture capital market since 1983, when we extended the scheme to larger companies, enables us again to place the emphasis on smaller companies having a turnover of less than £500,000, which is more in line with the hon. Gentleman's thoughts in respect of seed capital.

The hon. Gentleman gave several reasons why he feels that the scheme is concentrated in south-east England, and disagreed with my views on that aspect. I was impressed by some of the hon. Gentleman's arguments, but I emphasise that it was never intended or marketed as an instrument of

regional or employment policy. It was always specifically designed as a national economic tool to encourage enterprise.

Mr. Morgan: Our complaint is that the scheme has become an instrument of reverse regional policy.

Mr. Lamont: There is always a tendency for any tax allowance scheme to be taken up in areas where economic activity is at its highest. As the hon. Gentleman said, sometimes take-up occurs where there is more capital available. I agree that it would be better to have a spread of financial services throughout the country, but I feel certain that the scheme has brought benefits to many regions.

The hon. Member for Workington referred to a matter that he raised last year concerning connected persons. I have seen no evidence to support the claim that he makes, but I shall look further into the matter and may write to him.

The hon. Gentleman said that he cites the Johnson Fry advertisement in every speech that he makes, and I hope that he is receiving a commission from that company for doing so, because he seems to be an active salesman for its services. He referred to the tax loopholes that Johnson Fry advertises. When he makes speeches quoting that advertisement, I am sure that he mentions also that it was perfectly possible for higher rate taxpayers to avoid paying any tax under a Labour Government. By using universally available 100 per cent. capital allowances, a higher rate taxpayer could easily avoid paying any tax under Labour, because similar schemes were being marketed at that time.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Those schemes related only to capital allowances.

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman makes the point that the schemes related to capital allowances. One hundred per cent. capital allowances were used in conjunction with leasing agreements by higher rate taxpayers to avoid paying tax. That happened frequently under a Labour Government and was a direct response to the very high marginal rates that they imposed.

The debate touched also on assured tenancies and on the Housing Act 1988. The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) gave several examples of bad landlords, but seemed to argue against any privately rented accommodation, which is where I part company with him. Assured tenancies are subject to general law, which the Housing Act 1988 strengthens both in respect of harassment and illegal eviction, which has led to some recent convictions.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) mentioned the possibility of a rent review provision being used to drive out a tenant. Even at this early stage, I think that the problem mentioned by the hon. Gentleman is unlikely to arise, for there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. However, we shall keep an eye on that aspect.

The Opposition amendment would simply build on clause 44, which will end a tax loophole that has been exploited to excess. The only difference between us is that the Opposition contend that that loophole should be closed retrospectively, but no argument has been advanced to justify that contention. The Government are blocking the loophole because it is now thought to be excessive, but there is no doubt that those who have already exploited it did so perfectly legally, and it would be wholly wrong for Parliament to legislate on it retrospectively. Nothing said by the Opposition justifies such a draconian measure, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:
The Committee divided: Ayes 161, Noes 237.

Division No. 193] **[6.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, John P.
Snape, Peter

Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.
Clause 44 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 138

POWER TO CALL FOR DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 103, line 45, at end add—

'(7A) In subsection (8B) after the words "under subsection (8A) above" there shall be added the words "or under subsection (3) above".'.

I shall not detain the Committee for long. The amendment is rather technical, but it impinges on the rights of taxpayers vis-a-vis the Inland Revenue. The Committee will recollect that, following the Keith report, the Inland Revenue has taken powers to require third parties to disclose documents and information about individual taxpayers. Not only does the Inland Revenue have that right, but it does not necessarily have to name the taxpayer. For example, the Inland Revenue could ask

an insurance company how many insurance policies covering inheritance tax had been taken out in the past six or 12 months. That can put a tremendous cost on third parties.

7.15 pm

The amendment endeavours to give the taxpayer the right of appeal because the Inland Revenue has to go before the commissioners to get permission to ask a third party for information about individual taxpayers, whether or not they name them. "Keith: Further Proposals", which came out last year, recommended that all third parties who were asked for information about a particular taxpayer, whether identified or not, should have the right of appeal, as some of the costs of complying with some of the Inland Revenue's requests to third parties could be pretty onerous. One could envisage that a third party might be asked by the Inland Revenue something about a taxpayer that happened 10 or 15 years ago. That would put an onerous and costly responsibility on that third party.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will not resist the amendment, as it gives the third party another appeal to which he should be entitled. In my view, the Inland Revenue should not have the right to ask a third party to produce information about a taxpayer if that third party does not have the right to say that the request is far too onerous without being allowed to go before the special commissioners. I am asking only that the third party should be able to go before the special commissioners.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend will say that the third party has the right not to comply with the Inland Revenue's request, and the non-compliance of that request then puts that third party into the penalty area. When that third party is subject to a penalty, he has the right to a hearing. It seems rather ridiculous that a third party, having been asked by the Inland Revenue to supply information, and having replied that the request is far too onerous and that it would be far to expensive to go back five or 10 years, then has to be in the penalty area before he can get a hearing in which he can say to the commissioners that the request is far too onerous.

I hope my right hon. Friend will consider the matter. It is a simple amendment, but it seeks to give more flexibility and certainly more rights to the third party who may have nothing whatsoever to do with the taxpayer being investigated.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has asked an extremely important question. The provisions that we are discussing relate not to unnamed but to named taxpayers. I make that clear, because I think that my hon. Friend bracketed the two together.

For many years, the Revenue has been allowed to require a third party to provide access to documents in his possession relating to the tax affairs of a named person. This power is not altered by the Bill, other than to remove a small loophole that allows some third parties, in certain circumstances, to be used as safe havens if taxpayers are intent on frustrating the Revenue.

That power is subject to stringent controls. The inspector can require access only to documents that, in the inspector's reasonable opinion, contain information relevant to a tax liability of the person whose affairs are under inquiry. The inspector must first ask the third party to provide access to the documents voluntarily, and give him a reasonable time to comply. Only if this fails can the inspector proceed further. The inspector must next apply to an appeal commissioner, who is independent of the Revenue, for permission to issue a formal notice. The commissioner is required to be satisfied that in all the circumstances the inspector is justified in requiring access to the documents in question before he can give his consent. Only if the commissioner is satisfied can the inspector give a formal notice to the third party requiring him to provide access to the documents in question.

The existing procedures provide protection against any unnecessary or excessive invasion of privacy. In particular, they provide protection against unreasonable burdens on third parties.

The commissioner is required to be satisfied that in all circumstances the inspector is justified in proceeding with his request. This means that he must inquire into whether the request is reasonable and must take account of all representations which have been made. In particular, the informal request by the Revenue to the third party provides the third party with an opportunity to raise any objections that he has to the notice, including objections on the ground that it would be burdensome, which must be reported to the commissioner by the inspector and taken into account.

The Keith committee agreed that this information power should continue to be subject to oversight by the independent appeal commissioners, but Keith thought that the public would be better safeguarded if the present procedures for an informal request and review by the commissioners, in every case before a notice was given, were replaced by a right of appeal to the commissioners after the notice had been given. Most of the respondents in the consultations on the recommendations of the Keith committee disagreed. The overwhelming majority of respondents, including all the bodies representing businesses and the accountancy and legal professions, believed that the existing provisions—with oversight by the commissioners before the event—would provide better safeguards for the taxpayer than oversight after the event through a separate right of appeal.

The Inland Revenue proposed, in the consultative paper published last July, to leave the procedures unchanged. The majority of respondents to that consultative paper agreed. A few suggested that there should be both oversight before the event and oversight after the event with a new right of appeal. The majority of respondents recognised that this was not necessary, and would put an unreasonable burden on the Revenue and the commissioners. The present procedures provide full safeguards for the taxpayer and it is not necessary to introduce further complications.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South suggests that a limited right of appeal should be introduced to allow third parties to appeal on the ground that it would be onerous to comply with the notice. When we introduced a new power, in last year's Finance Bill, allowing the Revenue to require access to documents about unnamed taxpayers, we included such a right of appeal. However, there is a distinction in the circumstances. A notice requiring information relating to an unnamed taxpayer can be in respect of a possibly large class of taxpayers. This means that the Revenue and the appeal commissioners may inadvertently require access to documents relating to a much larger class of taxpayers

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

than was intended. For this reason, we provided a limited right of appeal on the ground that it would be onerous to comply with the notice. The circumstances are different for a notice in respect of a single, named taxpayer.

I am reluctant to accept the amendment. Although the third party does not have a direct right of appeal to the commissioners, he has full and proper right of appeal under the present procedures. First, the third party can appeal directly to the courts by way of judicial review. The Revenue is entitled to require access to documents that may reasonably be required for the purposes of determining the tax liabilities of the named taxpayer. A notice requiring access to more documents than could reasonably be required would be struck out by the courts, as was established in 1974 in Clinch *v.* Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

Secondly, the third party has an indirect right of appeal to the appeal commissioners. If the third party considers that the notice is unreasonable, he can object to the Revenue, explaining his reasons. The Revenue can accept his reasons and withdraw or modify the notice, or reject them and insist that he complies with the notice. If he refuses to do so, the Revenue can let the matter drop or institute penalty proceedings before the appeal commissioners. The proceedings give the third party an opportunity to appeal against the notice to the appeal commissioners by explaining his reasons for refusing to comply. If the taxpayer's appeal is upheld, there will obviously be no penalty.

I am not persuaded by the amendment. The subject was discussed in consultations on the recommendations of the Keith committee. It was widely recognised that one had a choice of oversight before or after the event, but not both. Although my hon. Friend made some comments about penalty proceedings, there is a longstop by which the taxpayer can gain access to the appeal commissioners.

My hon. Friend was as persuasive as he always is, but I cannot accept the amendment.

Mr. William Clark: My hon. Friend did not say that the third party is not represented before the commissioners. I cannot understand my right hon. Friend saying that the third party has access to the courts. Of course he has, but that is terribly expensive. If I am a third party and the Revenue is inquiring into the tax affairs of someone I knew years ago, I cannot understand why I should be put to the burdensome cost of complying. Who will pay the legal fees? They will fall on me. It would be simpler if my right hon. Friend were to reconsider the issue. It is simple to allow the third party a right of immediate appeal to the commissioners, whereby everyone is protected. It is convoluted to say that there is a longstop and that the third party can argue his case in the penalty proceedings. I do not think that my right hon. Friend can justify that.

Why can the inspector of taxes request a third party's documents from the commissioners without the third party or the named taxpayer being present?

Mr. Norman Lamont: The recommendations are based on the recommendations of the committee under Lord Keith. They were the subject of widespread consultation and there was a degree of consensus for them. However, my hon. Friend is clearly unhappy. I will reflect further on what he has said, but I hope that he will not take that as a commitment to bring a proposal forward on Report.

Sir William Clark: I accept that, and I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. He said that there had been considerable consultation and that the consensus was that this provision was perfectly all right under the Keith proposals. However, the Confederation of British Industry, which represents a tremendous number of the business interest in this country, is not happy. As my right hon. Friend has promised that he will consider my proposal—I realise he will do so without commitment—I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

7.30 pm

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): On behalf of the Opposition Treasury Front Bench, I welcome you, Mr. McWilliam, to the Chair of the Committee on the Finance Bill. It is a pleasure to see one of my colleagues from the northern region in the Chair. The uncharitable might say that if I have to go through the Finance Bill, it is nice to know that I am taking someone with me—at least part of the way.

This debate is an opportunity for us to discuss on the Floor of the House some of the principal issues involved in a range of clauses which implement the recommendations of the Keith committee. Clause 138 deals with the Inland Revenue's right to information, and it is therefore an appropriate introductory vehicle to the more detailed examination that will take place in Committee upstairs. I must say at the outset that we welcome the clause and have no intention of voting against it. However, I regret that it has taken the Government from 1984 until now to introduce the important recommendations of the Keith committee into legislation.

The Keith committee was set up in 1980 and responses to its proposals were made in 1984 and 1985. It is significant that it has taken the Government so long to evaluate the Keith proposals and the responses. The time they have taken gives an insight into, among other points, the energy of the tax avoidance lobby.

Several issues arise directly out of clause 138. I want to highlight two of them, the first of which is the Revenue's right of access to accountants' working papers. The accountancy profession itself has mixed views about the proposed treatment under this clause. If *Accountancy Age,* is to be believed, and I am sure it is, some accountants have seen the clause as going some way to meet the reservations that the profession has expressed, whereas others in the profession are still concerned that the Revenue's powers may be too wide and that that could lead to an infringement of taxpayers' legitimate rights.

Many who have commented on this aspect of the clause have made the point that the proposal puts the accountancy profession on the same footing as solicitors —in other words, that the relationship that accountants have with their clients is privileged. I am not sure that the analogy with solicitors is helpful in this context or that it is the right way in which to proceed. A solicitor has a duty to represent his client's interests to the best of his professional ability and there can be no ambiguity about which side a solicitor is on. The position for the

accountancy profession is less clear-cut. There has been discussion in the profession about the balance that has to be struck between an accountant's duty to the ethics of the profession and his natural desire to maximise the money accruing to his client—who is, after all, paying for the accountant's services—and those factors may sit uneasily alongside each other. Such issues are not always clear-cut, just as the dividing line between tax avoidance and tax evasion is not always plain to see.

Mr. Beith: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman intended to suggest that the dilemma between the ethics of the profession and the interest of the client does not arise in the case of solicitors. The hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that there was no analogy between accountants and solicitors, but solicitors face the same problem. A solicitor must ensure that in pursuing the interests of his client, he does not offend the ethics of his profession or the law itself.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop the argument a little further, he will see the distinction I am trying to make. The intervention was premature.

The working papers of accountants are professionally prepared documents which show clearly how a particular decision or conclusion has been reached. Such papers might also show what other conclusions were under consideration, but were rejected. It is not hard to understand why the Revenue would like access to those documents or why the accountancy profession is uneasy about such Revenue access. To put it no more strongly, it would be quite understandable for accountants to think twice about what they would commit to paper if they knew that one day their views would be exposed to scrutiny by their opposite number in the Revenue, perhaps in an adversarial setting.

The decision that is made on clause 138 has an important impact on the debate about the balance between an accountant's duty towards the profession and professional ethics, and the accountant's much narrower duty towards his client. The clause places the emphasis firmly on the accountant's role as a professional adviser, who is clearly on the side of the person employing him. If that is the intention, the analogy with the legal profession to which I referred earlier begins to look better. However, there are implications for the future of the accountancy profession and, in particular, implications for its self-regulatory status and its relationship with the Revenue.

The other important issue in the clause is the Revenue's right to information—a right that can be exercised only if the Revenue has sufficient staffing to exercise it in all the cases in which it is necessary. The clear result of inadequate staffing in the Inland Revenue is that tax avoidance is encouraged because tax avoiders know that they have a better chance of getting away with it.

Tax inspectors are probably the most cost-effective employees of the Government. In 1987-88, the uncovering of tax frauds and undeclared tax raised just over £2 billion for the Exchequer, which was a 20 per cent. increase on the 1986-87 figure. The average yield brought in by a grade 7 inspector undertaking accounts work in one of the specialist tax offices dealing with large commercial firms was, on average, almost £1 million per head in 1987-88. It is perfectly clear that growth in that area would be cost-effective for the Government, and for the British taxpayer.

The other side of the coin is that it is also perfectly clear that failure to staff the Inland Revenue adequately is costing the country a great deal of money. In a parliamentary answer given to me last Monday, the Financial Secretary himself told me—*[Interruption.]* The Financial Secretary himself told me that the amount of tax written off as impossible to recover has risen fivefold, from £60 million in 1979 to just over £333 million in 1987. The number of non-taxpayers involved increased over the same period from 57,191 to 119,520 by 1987.

The Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service has recently considered manpower losses in the Inland Revenue and has expressed its concern at the loss of tax inspectors from the Inland Revenue. In 1987-88, 260 left, and 170 left the year before that. According to the Committee, resignation rates have jumped significantly, especially in London and the south-east. Some of the blame for that has been put on the rates of pay, which have not kept pace with the remuneration offered in the private sector. If there are particular difficulties in London and the south-east, surely it is time for the Inland Revenue to look again at the relocation of some of its activities to the regions.

It is also time for the Government to look again at the rates of pay for Revenue employees. It is no good putting more power into the hands of the Revenue if it does not have sufficient staff to allow it to exercise that power. Sadly, it is said that careers officers at universities are advising graduates to join the Inland Revenue for training and then move across to the private sector for the money. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee was told that it costs £50,000 or more to train a skilled tax inspector. I greatly resent the fact that the British taxpayer is paying to train tax inspectors only to watch them move across to the private sector to use that training for the opposite purpose to that for which it was intended. It cannot be in the interests of the British taxpayer to train experts in tax avoidance if they then go to work for the tax avoiders rather than the tax collectors.

The issue of manpower losses is serious—the more so when the initial understaffing of Revenue divisions is taken into account. In 1984 the Government said that they proposed to set up a new division to clamp down on schedule D evasions. The unit was to have 780 staff in post by April 1988. By mid-1988 there were only 588 staff in post.

It is important to set the Government's attitude to tax evasion in its wider context—their attitude to other types of evasion. The Public Accounts Committee has an important role to play in that regard. The PAC has alerted the House to similar problems in other Departments in a number of its reports. Last November, we debated staff levels—which we have just discussed in relation to the Inland Revenue—at Customs and Excise, which was dealt with in the Committee's 33rd report. Surprisingly—perhaps not surprisingly—that report made similar observations to those that I have made about the Revenue. Again, emphasis was placed on the difficulty of recruiting staff in London and the south-east. The House was told that one serious consequence of understaffing seemed to be that Customs and Excise found it easier to pursue smaller

[Mr. Brown]

and more readily discerned evasion than tackling the larger issues. Our fear must be that exactly the same applies to the Inland Revenue.

In that context it is instructive to compare the lack of resources put into pursuing income tax evasion with the strenuous efforts that the Government are making to combat benefit fraud in England, Wales and Scotland—although not, according to the Public Accounts Committee, in Northern Ireland. There has been a steady increase in the number of fraud investigators employed by the Department of Employment. Since 1984-85, when the figure stood at 450, it has increased to 820 in 1988-89 with an attendant increase in support staff.

The figures for the Department of Social Security show a similar increase since 1979-80. In that year 2,311 people in full-time equivalent posts were directly employed in fraud-related work. The figure has grown to 2,940 in 1988-89. The Department of Employment can also report a substantial increase in the number of presecutions over the same period—2,250 in 1984-85, rising substantially to 4,045 in 1988-89. That substantial emphasis on combating state benefit fraud sits unhappily alongside the Government's failure adequately to staff the Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise which could both return far greater sums to the Exchequer if resources were properly applied.

It is with those reservations that the Labour party approaches the clause, although we do not oppose any measure that will tighten up the current regulations and make tax evasion more difficult. We only wish that the Government shared our enthusiasm for such measures.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I shall elaborate on some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It was interesting to hear, during our previous debate on amendment No. 23, the considerable concern expressed by the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) about the rights of accountants and their clients and the need to ensure that they were treated fairly and dealt with by approved methods. If only the same concern were shown for those who are being investigated for social security fraud. Let us be blunt about this. We are talking about stealing, and I believe that stealing should be treated in the same way whether it is stealing from a gas meter, from the Department of Social Security or from the Inland Revenue, yet we have very different ways of investigating and treating those different forms of stealing.

7.45 pm

Let me give the House an example from my constituency. A number of my constituents—who were very vulnerable because they were recovering alcoholics or drug abusers or were mentally ill—were living in a hostel and it was recommended that as part of their treatment they should go to work in another hostel and help the addicts there. They were given expenses. Someone at the Department of Social Security deemed that they were workers and receiving an income. That income was immediately confiscated—in the form of deductions from their benefits. Some 13 months later their case had still not been heard. During the investigation they were treated in what they described as in a thuggish way by the fraud squad, who made all kinds of threats.

My constituents approached me and I wrote to the Department of Social Security asking it to investigate the case. Several months later, I received a letter from the Department saying that the allegations had been investigated and found to be groundless. The investigation did not even involve a representative of the Department of Social Security interviewing my constituents and asking them about the basis of their complaints. That was the quality of the investigation.

In contrast, it has taken the Government nine years to implement this tiny part of the Keith committee report on fraud and the Inland Revenue. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East pointed out, the Government seem indifferent to the fact that in 1987-88 we were 200 tax inspectors short, and the Government have not said how they propose to fill those vacancies. It is the economics of Passchendaele. We are training people at a cost of £50,000 to perform a public service but that money is wasted because they go to work elsewhere.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): There is a knock-on effect.

Mr. Worthington: As my hon. Friend says, there is a considerable knock-on effect. Nine years ago there was a 1·8 per cent. wastage rate among Inland Revenue inspectors in London, and in 1987-88 that figure had risen to 11·9 per cent.

According to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, we could reduce income tax by 2p in the pound simply by recruiting enough tax inspectors. Perhaps the House could unite on that. The Inland Revenue admitted losing £5 billion in uncollected taxes and that 16 per cent. of tax inspectors resign each year. Surely it is not beyond the Government's wit to see what a splendid money-making venture these could be. All we need to do is to find a way of recruiting tax inspectors, and everybody could pay 2p in the pound less in income tax each year.

Why does that proposal not come forward from the Government? Why is there an absence of innovation and enterprise? Why can Lord Young's energies not be set free in this matter? We could have a wondrous advertising campaign to find tax inspectors. It would not matter what we paid them; it would be extremely cost-effective. I suspect that energy has not been put into the matter because too many Conservative Members think that too many stones might be overturned.

Nevertheless, hon. Members should ask the Minister for an explanation of how the Inland Revenue will be adequately staffed. The matter cannot be left to the Civil Service Commission. It could not fill a pint glass, never mind rapidly fill a job vacancy. We need to do something more innovative than leave it to the Civil Service Commission to find an adequate number of tax inspectors. What will be done to fill the vacancies? It is clear that the country is losing a great deal of money by the failure to act energetically.

Mr. Beith: The appearance on the statute book of a chapter of Revenue powers might give cause for some concern, but deliberations of the Keith committee and the wide consultations that surrounded it have led to a set of provisions that have met with general satisfaction because of the combination of new provisions and new safeguards and the analogous way in which they have been related to the powers of other agencies. It seems a strange fact of life that, as Members of Parliament, we tend to come into

contact with tax cases, when the powers of the Revenue have been inadequate properly to discharge a task and someone has got away.

That applies to other matters. One has the vision of the Barlow Clowes affair and documents being shredded in an upstairs room—incidentally, just across the road from where I was born—while the Department investigators were coming in the front door. It conjures up pictures of Miss Fawn Hall going out of the Pentagon with documents in her boots, as I believe she confessed to having done. Powers have either been insufficient or insensitively used. The taxpayer who may have made an error, rather than seek to defraud the nation, suddenly finds the apparatus descending on him with a degree of thuggishness, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) described in relation to a benefit fraud case. The powers seem to be necessary and accompanied by appropriate safeguards.

I served on the Treasury Sub-Committee of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that looked into the staffing problem at the Inland Revenue, and I listened to the arguments that were put forward. Like all members of the Sub-Committee, I was struck not only by the vast amount of money that is being lost by the lack of staffing but by the need for more radical thinking about how to deal with the problem. Several points came to light. One was that, to be successful, it would be necessary for the Government to devote a lot more attention to making it possible to recruit and retain women tax inspectors. That argues for part-time work, opportunities for career interruption, child-care facilities and a range of matters that would make the job one in which women could be retained. The private sector will certainly look for ways to make tax consultancy a suitable option for trained female tax inspectors.

There seems to be a lack of flexibility in the payment system, as I remember from my questioning of an Inland Revenue official. Any private concern faced with the drift away of such large numbers of people would move quickly to provide appropriate incentives and remuneration when required. I am thinking particularly of the south-east of England. I agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East that substantial relocation is desirable. Some work has been done, but more could be done. When there is an immediate crisis and staff are moving away quickly, the payment system in the public service must have the flexibility to respond as the private sector would respond. We will waste our time by adding powers to the statute book if we do not ensure that the Revenue has enough staff to carry them out.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for his comments about the background to the Keith committee's conclusions and their implementation. When a series of clauses such as this are put in the Finance Bill it is not always appreciated to what extent they modernise and build safeguards into the powers that already exist. The hon. Gentleman summed it up fairly and accurately. I do not think that the proposals have caused alarm. They have been widely supported by professional bodies. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman confirmed that view—I like to hear that other people have that view. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said the same thing.

The only point with which I quarrel slightly is about the delay in introducing the recommendations. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) talked about these "tiny" provisions. They represent almost the last instalment of the Keith committee recommendations. We have been implementing them year by year. We have done so gradually for precisely the reason that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed highlighted: they are sensitive matters. The Revenue has been right to move on the basis of consultation and consensus.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East talked about legal and accountancy privilege. It is a controversial issue—one that I hesitated at the time to stray into in any way. There is no change in legal privilege. There is a change in the focus on the privilege of accountants. I was slightly surprised at what the hon. Gentleman said about accountants' concern. I do not think that that is true of representative bodies. They saw the clauses in the consultation exercise and did not express concern.

The Bill introduces a new and better-focused protection for confidentiality. The Revenue will not be able to require accountants to disclose their audit papers or the tax advice that they give their clients. That would broadly give the same protection for confidentiality to the taxpayer's accountant as to his lawyer. The Keith committee recommended that privilege, subject to the override, should be extended to tax advice given by accountants. As we decided against the override for legal professional privilege, it was not possible to extend legal professional privilege subject to the override to professional accountants as Keith recommended. The Government's approach is to provide a separate form of protection for accountants that is distinct from but similar to that given to lawyers. The present protection for accountants' papers needs a balance to ensure that the Revenue can see the papers that it needs to see, while properly protecting the confidentiality of the professional relationship.

In some instances, the protection is too broad. In many small businesses, accountants' working papers include most of the books of the business. In such cases it would be impossible for the Revenue to check and understand the accounts of a business if it were refused access to the accountant's working papers. On the other hand, the present protection for accountant working papers will fail to cover some of the papers that Keith thought should remain confidential. I believe that there is a degree of consensus for the proposals.

The hon. Members for Clydebank and Milngavie and for Berwick-upon-Tweed talked about the loss of tax inspectors in the Revenue. Of course I take the level of staff losses, especially in London and the south-east, extremely seriously. Steps are being taken to stem the losses. Some of the ideas mentioned by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed are precisely ones that are being implemented in the Revenue. The Revenue is taking a number of steps, and the signs are that they are beginning to pay off. We are having special increases in pay targeted to groups with particular problems of recruitment and retention. Relocation was one of the points mentioned by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. We have a continuing and large programme to move work out of London to areas where costs are less. The Revenue is well in the van there.

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

We have also done a lot in terms of moving staff into the areas where they can concentrate resources on those areas that have the highest yield in relation to staff costs. The number of inspectors investigating accounts has increased 10 per cent. in the last three years. We have increased the resources and effectiveness in areas of compliance work by clerical staff below inspector level. The number of higher grade tax officers dealing with the black economy has nearly doubled in three years and the annual yield per officer on PAYE audit has doubled, coverage has trebled and the yield has increased fivefold. Yield from Inland Revenue counter-avoidance and evasion activities is worth £2 billion a year, which is equivalent to saving £80 for every taxpayer or a reduction of 1½p in the basic rate, which is not short of what the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngarvie spoke about.

8 pm

Turning to what we are meant to be talking about, the Keith committee and the reforms in detail, I should emphasise that they do not give sweeping new powers to the Revenue nor do they place new burdens on the taxpayer. They generally update and simplify the procedures while setting out clearly in law the limits on the power of the Revenue in establishing a full system of safeguards for the public.

Clause 138 is the first group of about 30 clauses whose purpose relates to the reform of the information of the Revenue. As I have said several times, they have been the subject of extensive consultation. Keith found that the powers of the revenue were neither excessive nor misused, but were out of date and needed revision. We need a balance between the interests of the tax gathering agency and its duty to the wider body of taxpayers. After Keith published its report in 1983, we invited parties to write in with comments. The revised proposals were well received. The consultative paper received a wide circulation. More than 800 copies were issued and there were many articles in the accountancy press on the proposals. There was a strong response from bodies representing the professions, businesses, firms of accountants and many individuals.

The vast majority of the proposals enjoyed the support of respondents. For example, the British Bankers Association

"welcome the pragmatic response displayed by the Revenue."

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland said —it is not often that we hear all these compliments to the Revenue—

"We wish to take this opportunity of commending the Inland Revenue. The consultation process which the Revenue has adopted for the introduction of the Keith Committee proposals has proved helpful. It has, we believe, been useful both to the Revenue and to the taxpayer."

The message has come through loud and clear that the right balance is rather difficult to reach. The solution of pleasing all of the people all of the time has perhaps not been reached, but I do not believe that there is any real reason for alarm or fierce criticism of the proposals. I am grateful to Opposition Members for what they have said about them.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1

RATES

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 2, leave out '£0·0272' and insert '£0·0292'.

The Temporary Chairman (Mr. John McWilliam): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 11, in page 2, line 2, leave out '£0·0272' and insert '£0·0383'.

No. 2, in page 2, line 2, at end insert—

'(2A) In section 13A of the Act (rebate on unleaded petrol for "£0·0272" there shall be substituted "£0·0292".'.

No. 12, page 2, line 2, at end insert—

'(2A) In section 13A of that Act (rebate on unleaded petrol) for "£0·0272" there shall be substituted "£0·0383".'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 8, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

'(4) Subsections (1), (2), (3) and (4) shall be deemed to have come into force at 6 p.m. on 14th March 1989. Subsection (2A) shall come into force at 9 a.m. on 10th May 1989.'.

Dr. Marek: I must point out that with amendment No. 1 we can discuss several other amendments that have been put down by Democrat Members who are not here at present, but who I hope will return quickly.

Hon. Members will notice that there is a bidding auction as to how much we should increase the rebate on unleaded fuel. Again, there may be a Division in the House on how far we should go in order to introduce unleaded petrol as quickly as possible. I do not believe, however, that there is any dispute about the desirability of doing so. The Opposition have reservations about how far the Government have gone. Perhaps we have even more reservations about the Government not doing anything about it until recently. To be fair, they have taken some measures, but we believe that they should have taken more.

The amendment is a moderate one, because we are a moderate party. We intend to continue along that path, but I will be interested to hear what the Minister says about the Government's programme and where it could be improved.

There is no doubt that lead poisons the brain. Lead additives in petrol find their way into all our bodies, and retard the development of children. Nearly all children are now affected to some extent by lead poisoning. Some recent research even suggests that lead is the primary risk factor for impairing the development of children.

Of course, large particles of lead emitted by cars will fall out by the roadside, and small ones will permeate the atmosphere. That is not a local problem. Lead gets into the air and it can be blown from here to nearly every country within the European Community. All of us suffer damage because we breathe it. We can do no other than breathe the atmosphere. Of course, when lead settles on plants and in the environment, we eat it through our food.

Unborn children are especially at risk because they are still developing in their mother's womb. It is interesting that the fatal dose for a woman is a blood level of 40 mg per 100 ml and the fatal dose for a man is 100 mg per 100 ml. Recent research found that in London schoolchildren suffered a seven point handicap in their IQ when their blood level was more than 13 mg per 100 ml. We must be clear that we do not need large amounts of lead in our blood. Certainly children do not need to have large

amounts of lead in their blood to suffer in their development and to suffer permanent damage for the rest of their lives.

I should like to examine what the Government have done and how they are doing it compared with the action in other countries.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman point out the research that shows that higher levels of lead in the atmosphere lead to higher levels of lead in the blood of adults rather than children? I am not aware of any evidence to the contrary.

Dr. Marek: I was not comparing adults with children. I was saying that both were involved. I am relying on the words of Professor Smith, who is professor of organic chemistry in the chemistry department at Reading university. The hon. Gentleman can obtain all the evidence that he needs from that source.

Mr. Mans: I understand that that research was limited to children, but the most substantive research on adults concentrated on taxi drivers in London, who were reckoned to inhale a considerable amount of lead. Surprisingly, however, there was no evidence that the amount of lead in their bloodstream was greater than that of the control group.

Dr Marek: The hon. Gentleman is talking about one set of experiments and all I can say is that that result is unexpected and, therefore, it is likely to be wrong. We need a lot more research into adults and ——

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro) *rose*——

Dr. Marek: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will allow me to finish my reply to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

Many more experiments are required to establish exactly what is happening. Although the metabolism of children is different from that of adults, it is not all that different and there could be a change in the relative intake of lead. However, what is certain is that most informed opinion would say that adults living in a lead environment would experience an increase in lead poisoning.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that in America between 1976 and 1980 there were substantial decreases in the lead emitted into the atmosphere through petrol and a substantial decrease—of 36 per cent.—in the amount of lead in average blood samples there. Therefore, there seems to be some evidence that runs contrary to that of the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving that evidence. I had hoped that we would have a discussion in which all hon. Members would be in general agreement about the problem so that we could simply seek a solution. Indeed, I think that we are probably all agreed that there is a problem that must be addressed and that the central question is whether the Government are approaching it in the right way and whether they are doing enough to get rid of the serious problem that we all agree exists, at least for children, and, some of us would add, for adults also.

It is a European if not a global problem because air circulates and I am fairly sure that lead emitted in this country would probably find its way right across Russia.

One piece of research from a Surrey university research group looking into the hazards of lead pollution on the M25 and M1 has recently caught my eye. The group found that the entire length of the M1 was littered with lead sediment—perhaps that is to be expected after 20 years. It also reported a huge rise at many of the intersections and found that even after only two years conditions on the Surrey section of the M25 were generally worse than those on the M1.

The group also found high concentrations of lead in Parliament square. I hope that none of us eats anything grown in Parliament square—I do not think that we do —but when we leave this building we go out into an atmosphere with possibly one of the highest concentrations of lead in the country. I think of that every time I leave the House and try to cross at the traffic lights at Bridge street and Parliament street. Many vehicles in that enormous roar of traffic are still emitting lead that we breathe in before the huge particles settle on the ground.

Let us compare what the Government have been doing with what has been happening in other European countries. In the Netherlands, unleaded petrol is available in every garage. In Denmark, the coverage figure is 90 per cent. and in West Germany it is 75 per cent. In March 1988, 700 garages in Britain sold unleaded petrol. By the end of January this year, that figure had increased to 4,300 that is, if my sources of information are correct. That represents about 22 per cent. of garages. The latest figure is that 38 per cent. of garages sell unleaded petrol. I am sure that the proportion here is higher than in countries such as Spain or Greece, although I do not have the figures for the number of garages selling unleaded petrol in those countries. Nevertheless, the figure for this country is well below those for countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and West Germany.

The first question I want to ask the Minister is whether he confidently expects—

8.15 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding) *rose*—

Dr. Marek: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute. Perhaps he will just let me ask my question.

Does the Minister confidently expect that the good rates of increase that we have seen in the past few months will be kept up, so that, standing at the Dispatch Box in a year's time, I shall be able to give credit to the Government because instead of 38 per cent. of our garages selling unleaded petrol, the proportion will be over 60 per cent. or even higher?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman is known as a distinguished mathematician so I wonder whether he can calculate for the benefit of the House the rate of increase from January last year until now in the number of garages selling unleaded petrol that the figures that he has just quoted to the Committee represent. Does he agree that it would be churlish not to give the Government a great deal of credit for the remarkable rate of increase, which I know he will be able to calculate with greater accuracy and greater speed than myself?

Dr. Marek: I do not want to depart from the spirit of unanimity in the House about the fact that everybody wants to do something about this problem. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman must realise that rates of increases in

[Dr. Marek]

themselves do not show exactly what is happening in any particular situation. At Treasury Question Time last Thursday, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the rate of increase in inflation in West Germany was 300 per cent. when it increased, if my memory serves me correctly, from 0·5 per cent. to 1·5 per cent. That is a high figure, and the Chancellor was prepared to use it, but most people would still say that inflation in West Germany is a lot less, at 1·5 per cent., than inflation in this country, where it is 7·9 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should not try to mislead me by appealing to a selected statistic and saying that, if it sounds good, everything in the country must be rosy.

I am glad that the Government have done something and I am pleased that they have done what they did in connection with the rebate on unleaded petrol in the Budget. My reservation is that they should have done a little more and I shall suggest later what they could have done.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to know another statistic, which is that, instead of unleaded petrol representing 1 per cent. of all petrol sales as it did a year ago, 6 per cent. of petrol sales are now unleaded. That is a substantial increase and I hope that credit will be given for that also.

Dr. Marek: That may be right, but the hon. Gentleman's party's research department has been a little lackadaisical in not giving him the right figures. I thought that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment announced a figure of 14 per cent. a few days ago— *[Interruption.]* Well, like us all, the hon. Gentleman must first try to get his facts right and secondly, he must give me time to develop my case because I intend to come to the question of total petrol sales in this country.

At the moment, I am considering the number of garages or the percentage of garages in this country that sell unleaded petrol. The fact is that the proportion is about 38 per cent. at present, whereas in West Germany it is 75 per cent. In Denmark it is 90 per cent., and in the Netherlands every garage must sell unleaded petrol. Therefore, I want to ask the Economy Secretary whether he can do more to increase the number of garages that are selling unleaded petrol in this country. Why will he not ban or say that he intends to ban the sale of two-star and three-star petrol in a year or two so that those pumps can then be used to sell unleaded petrol?

I turn now to what the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) said about the percentage of unleaded petrol that is sold. I have a few figures. In the Netherlands and Switzerland, over one third of the petrol sold is unleaded, in Denmark and Sweden it is one third and in West Germany about half is lead-free. In Britain, over a year ago about 0·1 per cent. of petrol sold was unleaded. In February of this year, 5 per cent. of petrol sold was unleaded and, if I am right, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 1 May that 14 per cent. of petrol was unleaded.

That is a creditable increase, but will the Government confirm that it will continue and that, if we have the same debate in a year's time, that 14 per cent. will have risen to more than 33 per cent.? If that were so, I would certainly compliment and congratulate the Government. However, 14 per cent. is low compared to the figures in other developed, responsible and evironmentally conscious countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark, West Germany, Switzerland and Sweden.

Some countries do have lower figures than the United Kingdom. The sale of unleaded petrol in Spain is still only about 1 per cent. of its total petrol sales, and in Luxembourg, for other reasons, the figure is about 4 per cent. We should be leaders in Europe, but, as in so many other ways, we never are; we are always trying to catch up from the back.

I repeat my question to the Economic Secretary: is he confident that the 14 per cent. will have risen to more than 30 per cent. in a year's time? If not, the Government must take on board extra measures to try to increase the sale of unleaded petrol. Will all new cars be able to run on lead-free petrol after October 1989? Have there been any hitches in that process? Is the Government's relationship with car manufacturers and companies good?

I have already referred to prohibiting the sale of two-star and three-star petrol. The Government could take some action because such petrol is necessary in only a few restrictive circumstances. The Government could not only prohibit the use of two-star and three-star petrol and say that those pumps should sell unleaded petrol, but could go further and say that every garage should sell unleaded petrol. I wonder how much hardship to garages would result from that? Perhaps it would mean some increases in their costs, but the Government should consider that matter now, so that the industry has plenty of time in which to adjust. One or two garages may not be able to sell unleaded petrol simply because they do not have room, but that could be overcome if the Government had a mind to do it.

The Government could substantially reduce the tax on unleaded petrol for a temporary period, perhaps two or three years. That would reduce the price far more than the amendment tabled by the Opposition, and perhaps even more than the amendment tabled by the Democrats.

The Government should make it abundantly clear to car owners that they can, by spending £20, have their car adjusted to run on unleaded petrol. At the moment, there is a difference of perhaps 10p per gallon. The sales and availability of unleaded petrol are rising, but if they start flattening off, a big increase in the rebate for unleaded petrol should be seriously considered as a temporary measure to help people to adjust their cars for unleaded petrol. Two out of three cars can, with a small adjustment, run on unleaded petrol.

Exhortation should play a part in this process, as should appealing to the environmental spirit in the country. We should exhort people to think about the welfare of others. That is something which the Government are not particularly good at doing. We must make it worth while for people to run their cars on unleaded petrol. There would be nothing wrong in increasing the price of four-star petrol, because once enough motorists use enough unleaded petrol, the tax on leaded petrol can be increased.

Mr. Mans: Is that the Labour Party's policy?

Dr. Marek: No, it is a suggestion from the Opposition to the Government.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am seriously worried about the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. Many of my constituents do not frequently change their

cars and many of them may well vote for the Labour party. People who have fairly old cars often cannot afford to change them very often and it would be an unfair imposition on them to force them to change their cars when they probably cannot afford to do so. I wonder if the hon. Gentleman really means what he is saying.

Dr. Marek: I expect that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make the price increases in four-star petrol, to which I am alluding, seem far better than they would be. Petrol should be valorised each year. At the moment, it is at an historically cheap level, but it will not continue to be so for many more years.

I would always make the health of our nation and children a higher priority than cost. I am not saying that my suggestion is the only way of bringing unleaded petrol into general use throughout the country. There are various ways, and I have suggested three or four. If other ways fail, my last suggestion should not be dismissed by any Government. I hope that the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is now satisfied about what I mean.

I do not want to take up too much time because we want to finish the debate by about 10 o'clock. We must advertise and let motorists know that unleaded petrol is available in garages, that is is cheaper and that their car can, with minor alterations, be adjusted to take it.

Have the Government carried out any market research on the effect of their recent publicity campaign, which I welcome? Has it been effective? I know that the Campaign for Lead-Free Air has received £20,000 or £30,000 over three years. That is not very much and I wonder how much money the Government are putting into publicity.

The Government must be careful to ensure that the recent increases in the amount of unleaded petrol being sold do not flatten off and that the number of garages selling unleaded petrol continues to rise. The country would not like the reasonably good figures for the past five or six months to level off and nothing to be done about it. If that were to happen, the Government would have no excuse for not listening to what the Opposition are saying. That is why we have tabled the amendment.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has just made a fairly long and, he may judge when he reads it, slightly controversial speech. Nevertheless, we would all agree with some of the things that he said. He made the important point that pollution, which is what this debate is about, is no respecter of national boundaries. He also suggested—a suggestion which I welcome—that we should try to tackle these matters on a partisan basis. He talked about the sales of unleaded petrol in other countries. Will my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary—either when he replies to the debate or at a later date—contemplate the proposition that some of those countries' Governments are possibly less influenced by their motor manufacturers or by the oil companies than our Government are? We have continually heard from the oil companies, and often from the motor manufacturers, that anti-pollution proposals made in connection with the motor car will cost the consumer unspeakable amounts of money. I frequently have grave doubts about the validity of some of those claims.

8.30 pm

I think I am right in saying that this is the third successive Budget in which the Chancellor has introduced inducements to purchase lead-free petrol, but this is the first time that the changes introduced have really bitten or resulted in significant take-up by the motoring public. We need to see the amendments in the context of the levels of inducement that should be offered by the Government to direct the public's purchasing power into environmentally desirable areas.

This brings us to the question of judgment. The hon. Member for Wrexham listed the policies of a number of Governments. He will be aware that the Dutch Government, to whom he referred, recently sought to impose swingeing environmental costs on motorists in Holland, the result of which has been that the Dutch Government are now unable to sustain themselves and face a general election. I can well understand that the hon. Gentleman might want to bring that about in this country, but I suspect that the Government are right to be cautious in order to avoid falling into the trap that the Dutch Government have set for themselves.

In his Budget speech, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said that the proposals which relate specifically to reducing the duty on lead-free petrol would cost the Revenue £40 million. Some of us with long memories recall that Labour Governments have an unrivalled ability to spend money, but not always to raise it or run a buoyant economy. The Government have a good track record and should be left to judge the level at which the duty on unleaded petrol should be set.

The environmental tinge to be seen in the motoring components of this Budget is entirely welcome. All these environmental changes are expensive. We would all agree in principle with the remark by the hon. Member for Wrexham that people's health is of paramount importance. He was also correct to say that this country has a lot of catching up to do. But no Government or political party would be doing justice to themselves or the electors if they failed to point out to people that environmental improvements—to do with petrol, water or anything else—are expensive.

I welcome what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said about unleaded petrol in the Budget speech, in which he said that he hoped his proposals

"will contribute to a marked increase in the use of unleaded petrol over the next 12 months."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 306.]

He went on to say that the level of vehicle excise duty on buses and coaches should cover their track costs. That is a means of ensuring that the environmental pollution created by certain forms of road vehicle is reflected in the taxation that they pay. I do not want to embarrass my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary by reminding him that we discussed track costs of coaches a few months ago and had a minor disagreement about them. I am sure that he shares my joy and satisfaction that the Chancellor accepted my proposition that coaches were not covering their track costs.

The purpose of clause 1—it is strange to debate it at the end of two days' discussion on the Floor of the House—is to use taxation policy as an instrument of environmental protection, which I strongly welcome. It is a significant change of Government policy which has a potential application in many other areas. As was clearly shown in the intervention made by some of my hon.

[Mr. Robert Adley]

Friends in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham, we are short of facts and knowledge about lead-free petrol—*[Interruption.]* I am not making a point against the hon. Member for Wrexham. We can all produce learned professorial quotations that inform us of different facts about lead-free petrol or any other subject.

We are short of facts not only about lead-free petrol but particularly about pollution and the damage to health caused by diesel vehicles. I think particularly of diesel vehicles that are heavily used in urban areas, such as coaches. The Royal Commission on environmental pollution in 1984 tackled the issue of pollution from motor vehicles. Its report was referred to in an article by Colin Dryden in *The Sunday Times* of 2 April this year. He said that smoke from diesel vehicles was

"in many circumstances at an unacceptable level ... the vehicles themselves have got bigger and more powerful."

He went on to refer to what other countries are doing, much as the hon. Member for Wrexham did, and to quote the American experience of diesel-free and lead-free petrol:

"American requirements are far tougher, particularly for buses, on the grounds that they put health more at risk through operating in cities."

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) spoke about a taxi driver. If that taxi driver had attached himself to the back of his vehicle and inhaled the fumes from it the levels of lead in his blood might well have been significantly different from those which apparently showed up in the "research" to which my hon. Friend referred.

In relation to hydrocarbon oil duties and vehicle excise duties, the proposition that the polluter pays is enshrined in clause 1. Air pollution, particularly from the internal combustion engine, is a significant factor in the problem known colloquially as the greenhouse effect. Large vehicles such as buses and coaches cause other forms of pollution —noise, congestion and damage to the road surface. I therefore hope that the first cautious step that the Government have taken along the road of using taxation policy to force environmental change is but the beginning, and that that policy will be pursued more vigorously in many other areas as the years go by.

Mr. Turner: As always in debates like this, it may be dangerous to take too wide a view on environmental pollution and the problems that people face not just in this country but throughout the world. My contribution will be simple and to the point. I recognise the efforts that the Government are making on this narrow facet of creating a healthier and more pleasant environent by encouraging the use of lead-free petrol. The Government have a reasonable and desirable objective. If we agree with their proposal, we must consider the incentives being built into the policy to achieve that objective.

The contribution of the Labour party is modest, in that we want to urge the Government to go further. That is why we have tabled the amendment. In Wolverhampton a local newpaper, the *Express and Star*, which has been mentioned in the House several times already, has run an excellent campaign to encourage the use of lead-free petrol. I have tabled an early-day motion congratulating the newspaper on what it has done. Over 1,000 private cars in Wolverhampton have been converted within a short period to use lead-free petrol. The local authority, neighbouring local authorities, the Midlands electricity board and numerous companies, large and small, all took part in the campaign and have contributed by converting their fleets of vehicles to lead-free petrol.

If the Government gave a greater concession, the campaign would be even more successful. I am speaking in the context of Wolverhampton but no doubt the same is happening in other areas. The Minister of State, Department of the Environment has taken an interest in the subject. There is widespread knowledge about how the campaign in Wolverhampton was orchestrated and the success that it has had.

There is a great role for the Government to go much further because transport is involved in so many facets of government. They could also play a useful part in encouraging other agencies to convert their vehicles. I make no modest claim; I had my car converted to use lead-free petrol, and it is running smoothly. I am pleased to have made that contribution to the campaign in Wolverhampton and to the policy of the Government. That is the essence of what we are trying to achieve.

I hope that we can persuade the Government to accept our modest amendment. Despite the success of the *Express and Star*'s campaign and of campaigns in other parts of the country, and the Government's taxation concession, we should create further incentives for people to convert their vehicles. That would make an important contribution to a better environment for us all and a healthier environment in which to bring up our children. In addition to the other steps that we might take to improve the environment, the amendment would make this country a better place for future generations.

8.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): I am sure that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) and I can achieve a fair amount of cross-party agreement on this issue. Pollution is important in Wolverhampton, which is close to the M6 and the M1. Within the next four to six years there will be a major new motorway to the west of Wolverhampton. It will go round our part of the west midlands. That means that children in Wolverhampton will run a greater risk of lead pollution.

The hon. Gentleman was right to recommend warmly the way in which the *Express and Star* has drawn attention to the advantages in the Budget for those who use lead-free petrol. I join him in saying what a good job the *Express and Star* has done be its exhortations. Ironically, by drawing attention to the success that the *Express and Star* has achieved, the hon. Gentleman has to some extent undermined his case for further tax reliefs. It is not the exhortation from the *Express and Star*—important and influential though the newspaper is—that is causing people to convert their motor cars; they are doing it because they believe that it is in their financial interest to take account of the already generous concession.

It is a matter of judgment what exactly the financial concession should be. There is no objective way of saying whether the more substantial concession proposed in the amendment is right or whether the slightly meaner concession—as the hon. Gentleman would put it—proposed by the Government is right. All we can do is wait and see. Since the Budget and the campaign by the *Express and Star*, 95 per cent. of garages in Wolverhampton are offering lead-free petrol for sale. We do not know how

many of our constituents are taking advantage of the offer, but presumably the garages in Wolverhampton, like those who have converted their vehicles to lead-free petrol, are selling lead-free petrol not just because they wish—in schoolboy language—to suck up to the *Express and Star* but because they believe that there is money in it. Presumably they believe that because people are buying the stuff. So far as one can see at present, it seems that the problem is being addressed, as the Foreign Secretary would put it. It may even be partially solved.

There is an element of menace about what the Labour party says. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) talked about other measures. Let us be careful about that. It would be possible to introduce a law which made it a criminal offence not to convert one's car to lead-free petrol within *x* months. It would then be possible to make it an offence to use leaded petrol. Cars could then be stopped at random by the police and their fuel tested. For those who believe in the extension of the criminal law that would no doubt be a splendid demonstration of the power of the state over the citizen, but it would be most unwise.

Every time that a citizen is stopped by the police, there is a tendency for him to say that he is not sure whether he likes being stopped by the police, that he feels rather uncomfortable about it.

Mr. Adley: I hesitate to stop my hon. Friend's splendid flow, but a simple way to achieve his objective without involving the police would be for the Government to say that in 10 or 20 years only lead-free petrol will be sold. That is precisely what has been proposed in California. I understand that in about 20 years it intends to do away with the internal combustion engine altogether. Is not that the way that we should be going?

Mr. Budgen: You still need some nark, whether it be a police officer or a man from weights and measures, to go round and see whether the stuff is being sold by somebody.

The Temporary Chairman: Order. I do not have any nark.

Mr. Budgen: When I say "you", I mean the nation. Whether the narks would be men from the Customs and Excise or from the constabulary, there would have to be narks of some sort to enforce the criminal law.

The more our objectives are achieved by encouragement and by tax incentives and the less we use the criminal law the better. I hope that the Labour party will stop waving the banner of other measures in a somewhat menacing way and——

Dr. Marek: Let me put the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. I have in no way suggested that we should employ the criminal law to stop motorists to see whether they are using unleaded petrol. I hope that that helps him.

Mr. Budgen: It is all very well saying that, but when the price of petrol went up enormously in the great days of the Administration of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) under his prices and incomes policy, it was not considered enough to allow the market to discourage people from going fast in their motor cars. The House will recall that an extra limitation was imposed, in that speed limits were reduced, not for reasons of safety but to control fuel consumption. In other words, the criminal law was used not to maintain safety but for economic reasons.

I remember travelling at 60 mph when the limit was 50 mph and being stopped by the police. I was only warned, but I felt extremely resentful. If the criminal law is extended for the wrong reasons, it creates such resentment and the House should remember that the most important condition for the enforcement of the criminal law is that the House and the country should have the consent and co-operation of the public. I repeat that, if the criminal law is used for economic reasons, it creates resentment. Let us by all means think of other measures and talk about ways of giving further financial inducements to whomever one likes, but let us not use the criminal law.

Mr. Illsley: I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr Turner) and the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I was beginning to think that I had stumbled into the wrong debate, as I do not have the opportunity to read the *Express and Star*.

The criminal law is already used to control the sale of diesel fuel. It is a crime to use agricultural diesel in an ordinary motor vehicle. Therefore, although my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) did not mention the criminal law, the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West is already upon us.

I should have thought that there would be unanimity on both sides of the Committee about the dangers of lead poisoning. I was surprised to hear the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) ask about studies on lead poisoning in adults. One study that I have been made aware of was carried out in Romania and relates to the male reproductive cycle. If that is not a good enough reason to be worried about lead poisoning, I do not know what is.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): There might be a problem in Romania, but would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on the reproductive abilities of a normal Glaswegian given the problems of lead in water pipes?

The Temporary Chairman: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) will not follow that line. The amendment relates to the narrow issue of lead in petrol.

Mr. Illsley: I was going to compare the number of vehicles in Romania with those in London, but I do not want to comment on the reproductive systems of Londoners or of people from any other part of the country. I simply want to reinforce the point that recent studies have uncovered the effects of low doses of lead on the male reproductive system.

There is enough information from studies to show the danger of lead poisoning, in particular lead poisoning from petrol. There is an urgent need for the average motorist to use unleaded fuel. However, the only incentive for a higher take-up of unleaded fuel is a financial one. The best way to achieve our objective seems to be to widen the difference in price between leaded and unleaded petrol. I agree that the Government's action since 1987 has gone some way towards achieving our objective. Between 1988-89 the increased take-up was about 1 per cent., but, since the Budget, that figure has more than doubled.

However, some account should be taken of other taxpayers. We must, when introducing legislation to

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD) 1988/1989

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

Date of publication: 1989/1990

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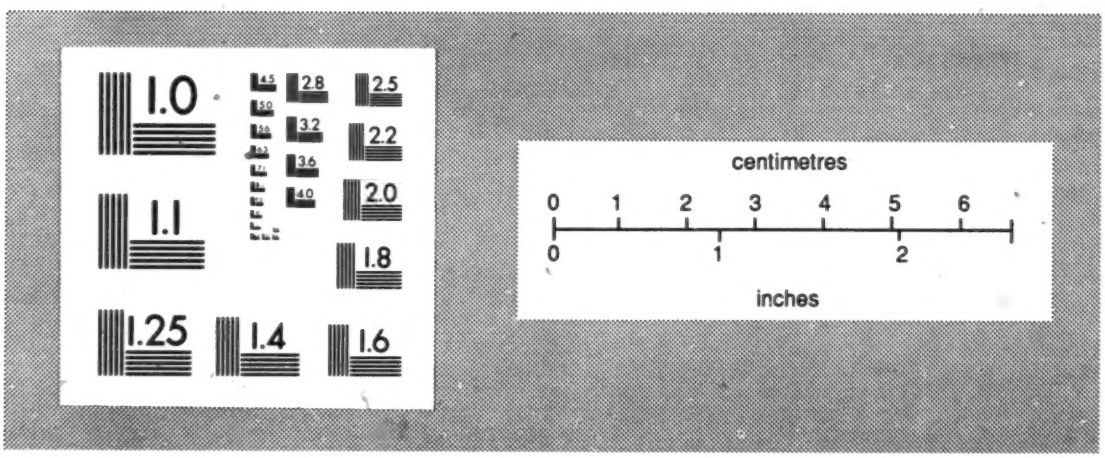
Technical data: Film type: postive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche processed to BSI and NMA standards.

Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



[Mr. Illsley]

promote the use of unleaded petrol, take note of the effect of the new measures on the public in general, including non-motorists. The result of the Chancellor's action was that the oil companies simply increased the price of leaded fuel. That resulted in the users of public transport, non-motorists and others having to bear the increased cost.

9 pm

The medical evidence in favour of using unleaded petrol is clear, and I await with interest any further remarks of the hon. Member for Wyre on that matter. Lead is a poison which, in large enough doses, causes heart disease, various cancers, respiratory disorders, insanity and other nervous disorders. The two additives in leaded petrol designed to prevent what is called the knocking effect—tetramethyl and tetraethyl—can be lethal. A drop or two on the skin can cause insanity. A few drops more can cause death.

For obvious reasons, most of the research has been concerned with children and expectant mothers, for they are most seriously at risk from lead in petrol. But there is a general case on behalf of the whole human race for the widespread use of unleaded petrol. Lead can be ingested, inhaled and in other ways absorbed into the body. Leaded fuel is responsible for 90 per cent. of the lead pollution in the atmosphere, which in this country, means that about 7,000 tonnes per annum of that type of pollution is pumped into the atmosphere.

To add to the evidence that other hon. Members have adduced to show that lead is a poison, I cite a survey that was carried out in my constituency at the Barnsley district general hospital. A report produced there by, among others, doctors Ward, Watson and Bryce-Smith, found a direct correlation between foetal growth and levels of lead found in placentae.

That survey was carried out 10 years ago. Even then, it said that leaded petrol was a threat to unborn children. Since then, not enough has been done to encourage motorists in the extended use of unleaded fuel. The Government are crowing about the measures they have implemented in recent months, but more could have been done since that report was published.

Nor is enough being done to encourage the petrol companies to supply unleaded petrol to garages. The first unleaded fuel went on sale in my constituency only last year. It is clear, therefore, that only in the last 12 months have many people been able to avail themselves of unleaded fuel.

Mr. Mans: Can the hon. Gentleman point to one occasion, prior to the Government initiative about 18 months ago to promote the use of unleaded fuel, when a Labour Member warned about the dangers of lead in fuel for children? The Government have not been lethargic in their approach to this matter. Prior to the first introduction of the differential, there was not enough evidence to show the sort of effects that the hon. Gentleman has been describing.

Mr. Illsley: The fact that I have cited a report that was produced in my constituency 10 years ago pointing out the dangers of using unleaded petrol shows that such evidence was available. I am sure that there was evidence predating that survey.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend may care to know that, before the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) came to this place, the Select Committee on the Environment examined this issue. Before the 1987 general election, Opposition Members were expressing concern about lead and other emissions from vehicles. It is wrong, therefore, to suggest that the matter was not raised in Parliament before the Government's recent action.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

Let us not forget the evidence that is and has been for some time available from other countries. It shows that lead-free petrol has been available for a number of years. EEC recommendations on the subject date from 1973. Japan was promoting unleaded fuel as long ago as 1975. If it is claimed that evidence was not available in this country —and my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has explained that it was—the Government could have paid attention to the evidence available in other, including EEC, countries, and taken a lead from them.

The take-up levels abroad far outweigh those in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham emphasised this point. In the Netherlands, the availability rate is virtually 100 per cent., as is the take-up. In Denmark the take-up rate is 90 per cent. In West Germany it is 75 per cent. But until recently in the United Kingdom only 5 per cent. of garages were able to supply unleaded petrol.

In West Germany, nearly 42 per cent. of all petrol sold is lead-free; in the Netherlands it is 36 per cent.; in Switzerland, 34 per cent.; in Denmark, 32 per cent.; and in Sweden, 30 per cent. Sales of unleaded fuel in this country increased between 1988 and 1989 from about 1 per cent. to 5 or 6 per cent. Since March, they have increased to about 14 per cent., and all credit to the Government for achieving that increase. I should like to see the figure increased beyond the 20 per cent. that Government spokesmen have been hinting will be achieved by the end of this year. We should try to push it up to the levels of our European counterparts.

Mr. Roger King: The hon. Gentleman has given figures for Switzerland and Germany, two countries which have introduced legislation making it mandatory to provide exhaust catalysts on cars. Those vehicles can run only on unleaded fuel. That is why the take-up in those countries is so much higher than it is here. Similarly in Japan, where they had a totally different problem of atmospheric pollution, not just from lead but from exhaust emissions generally. That obliged the Japanese to switch to exhaust catalysts in an attempt to clean up the atmosphere. So the hon. Gentleman is not being strictly fair in comparing the take-up rates in those countries with the rate in this country, where the fitting of catalysts is not mandatory.

Mr. Illsley: I defer to the hon. Gentleman's superior knowledge of the motor industry. We are not, in considering the amendment, debating the fitting of catalytic converters. That is why the comparisons that I was making are valid. It is a question of deciding how we are to achieve a greater take-up. Remembering that Japan has been dealing with this problem since 1975, we in Britain have had ample time in which to promote, by financial incentives, persuasion or legislation, the use of unleaded fuel. As the hon. Gentleman probably knows,

EC regulations to be introduced by October 1990 will require the majority of motor vehicles produced in this country to run on lead-free petrol.

As to the costs of converting a vehicle, obviously my constituents are in the same position as those of many other right hon. and hon. Members—particularly those of the hon. Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). No one is urging them to convert their vehicles overnight, but the point has been made already that two out of three vehicles can run on unleaded petrol without alteration—and while a conversion cost of about £20 has been mentioned, in my own constituency one major dealer is undertaking that work for only £4·95. Given that there is a 10p differential between leaded and unleaded fuel, the savings to be made from using the latter will start to be seen very rapidly.

Research by other countries shows that there is no increase in fuel consumption, no real need for engine modifications by manufacturers, no major increase in prices, and no great changes in refinery operations.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that some time was needed to allow British manufacturers to develop the lean burn technology as an alternative to the catalytic converter? One of the problems with the catalytic converter is the need for maintenance, adequate inspection and replacement. Britain was looking to a different route in the form of the lean burn engine. Another reason why we have not progressed at the same pace is that a large number of the vehicles currently on the road are not capable of the comparatively cheap conversion to unleaded fuel to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention. On the one hand there was a desire to make unleaded petrol more widely available, and on the other the interests of the car manufacturer and the car owner. What was the car owner to do with a vehicle that could not be converted? At the same time, manufacturers were exploring a different route.

Mr. Illsley: Since 1975—1973 in the case of the EEC—car manufacturers in other countries have been looking to greater use of unleaded. That was sufficient time to consider the introduction of unleaded fuel to this country. I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's argument, but greater pressure over the next few years to adopt unleaded fuel will compel motor manufacturers to comply. In recent years, when vehicle safety or other features were introduced by legislation—one thinks of front and rear seat belts, for example—it was left to manufacturers to incorporate them in future production rather than to the motorist to fit them himself. It may be that over the next few years motor manufacturers will be forced to develop models that use unleaded fuel over a much shorter time scale than would otherwise be the case.

More steps must be taken to encourage a better take-up of lead-free fuel. They include the scrapping of two-star petrol to free storage capacity for unleaded, more advertising campaigns about the benefits of unleaded fuel, and steps to encourage more motorists to convert their cars, even though two out of three vehicles are already capable of using lead-free fuel. Perhaps the best way of achieving those objectives is further to increase the price differential between leaded and unleaded fuel.

9.15 pm

Mr. Mans: The Government's present policy is the right one, and little would be gained by increasing the price differential between leaded and unleaded fuel to the extent suggested by Opposition Members. Before I introduced my ten-minute Bill last October on the provision of unleaded petrol and, specifically, engine adjustment, I too believed that the best way of achieving greater take-up was by cutting the price of unleaded petrol considerably.

However, I examined the subject closely last summer and it is now clear to me that many other limitations and reasons are to blame for take-up being slower than we should like. It was a chicken-and-egg argument. There were fewer unleaded petrol outlets, and very few car manufacturers were producing vehicles capable of using it. Of the new vehicles registered last August, 50 per cent. could have been adjusted for unleaded at the point of manufacture but, for a number of reasons, were not.

One reason was the type approval regulations. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic changed those regulations last September. However, the problem associated with those same regulations in a European context remains. Another problem was sheer ignorance in the motor trade and among the general public about which cars could be converted and about whether, having been so converted, they could still use unleaded. I make the point that simply decreasing petrol duty on unleaded fuel would not have the effect that Opposition Members suggest. However, I am pleased that so many of them are taking such a great interest in the subject.

Perhaps I misled the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsey) when I suggested that, prior to 1977, there was no evidence that something needed to be done about unleaded petrol. I was trying to make the point that at that time there was an insufficient number of right hon. and hon. Members who understood the problem in all political parties—not just in one particular party.

Also missing was a decent advertising campaign explaining to the public the problems of lead poisoning and that their cars could be converted. Today, we have all those activities up and running. Manufacturers are increasingly producing cars that can run on unleaded petrol. Virtually all the new cars from the Rover Group, for example, do so, and the same applies to many other major groups. That was not the case one year ago.

Garages are making increasing provision for unleaded petrol. It is noticeable that whereas six months ago, only one pump dispensing unleaded petrol would be available on a garage forecourt with virtually no one making use of it, even before the Budget a considerable number of extra outlets were provided, with a noticeably larger number of unleaded pumps installed on the forecourts of certain garages. It is noticeable that there are now queues for unleaded petrol, whereas before there was none. All that occurred without the extra incentive provided in this year's Budget.

I fear that, if we increased the differential, cars that could not be converted or that—for a number of mechanical reasons—it would be wrong to convert would be converted, simply because of a lack of knowledge in the motor trade about which engines could be converted and which could not.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend mentioned the problem of queueing at unleaded petrol pumps, which has certainly been visible over the past few months since the big swing to unleaded petrol. Garages have also been running out of such petrol at an increasing rate. There is clearly an opportunity for garages and petrol companies to encourage its use by converting more capacity as quickly as possible.

Mr. Mans: My hon. Friend has made his point very well. Supply and demand must be balanced: simply changing one side of the equation rapidly will not necessarily increase the take-up rate over a finite period. I think that the present differential is about right. Motor cars are increasingly being converted to run on unleaded petrol, and there are more and more extra pumps able to provide it. I am not convinced that an increase in differential will add to the take-up rate.

I was interested by some of the figures that the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) came up with. In the Netherlands, where the hon. Gentleman maintains that every garage must have an unleaded petrol pump, the take-up rate—according to the hon. Gentleman's figures—is only 33 per cent., whereas in Germany, where only 70 per cent. of garages have such pumps——

Dr. Marek: I suspect that the reason is the one given by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). In Germany, legislation has just been introduced requiring catalytic converters.

Mr. Mans: I accept that. I do not think, however, that simply making unleaded petrol pumps compulsory in all garages will necessarily mean a large increase in take-up. There are many other factors, including the type of engine involved. As I have said, I think that the differential is about right; the important thing is to achieve a complete programme to ensure that take-up increases progressively and reaches a much higher level. I am confident that within the year it will reach at least twice the present level of 14 per cent.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I am pleased to be able to speak to the Social and Liberal Democrat amendments, which provide a stronger financial incentive than any of the others that have been tabled. The starting point—on which everyone seems agreed tonight—is that, while much can be done to promote understanding of the need to turn to lead-free petrol, a financial incentive is needed for a rapid rather than gradual transfer as legislative requirements come to apply to motor manufacturers in any case.

I welcome the Government's recognition of that need through the provision to increase the rebate on excise duty on unleaded petrol, in tandem with changes in the duty levels on two-star and three-star petrol. That has resulted in a differential of perhaps as much as 10p a gallon, since it is not always passed on to the full extent. It has also resulted in considerable publicity, and there has clearly been an impact on the use of lead-free petrol.

The problem is that that is not enough; we would not have put our name to the amendments if we felt otherwise. The full value of the Government rebate will not be passed on to the consumer. I believe that the larger rebate that we propose would guarantee a greater differential on the forecourts, and that scale of differential will be needed to convince the many motorists who will have to convert their cars that such action is not only environmentally but financially advantageous.

Savings made through the use of lead-free petrol must provide immediate—or as near immediate as possible—compensation for the costs involved in the change. It must be made clear to motorists that they will stand to gain. I wish that we could persuade them without resorting to a financial incentive, but that is clearly not possible, as the Government have accepted by drawing up these measures. I think that they should go further.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why, when the Select Committee on the Environment was taking evidence on the matter only two years ago, neither he nor his party submitted any evidence to that effect?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has made a good party point, but it is not a very good point in practice. It is almost impossible from a practical point of view to make submissions on every subject; what we are doing is tabling a constructive amendment tonight.

The amendment would contribute towards a differential of about 15p at the pumps, which would mean a saving of about £45 a year for the average motorist. That is not much in itself, but should be sufficient to motivate many people to convert their cars. In my view, anything else would be inadequate. The Labour amendment adds nothing to what the Government are doing: it is not sufficient to make any real change.

There is no doubt that motorists understand in theory the need for change; a recent survey suggested that four out of five drivers considered that air pollution from car exhausts represented a serious threat to the environment. Yet, although 10·5 million cars on our roads could run lead-free, in February 1989 only about 250,000 had been altered—although the figure will have increased since then. That is where the economic incentives come in.

There is also a need to convince independent retailers that it is in their interests financially—or even that the risk is worth bearing—to promote lead-free petrol in their outlets. Otherwise, we cannot really explain why Britain lags so far behind many of the leading countries; we have heard many figures proving that that is the case.

It is an environmental issue that Governments can tackle effectively. Earlier in the debate, we discussed some of the evidence of the impact that changing to lead-free petrol can have in the health of adults and children. I referred to evidence from America which showed that, between 1976 and 1980, there was a 55 per cent. decrease in the amount of lead in petrol and a 37 per cent. reduction in the average level of lead in blood. That suggests a clear and immediate link between lead in petrol and people's health.

The problem is that, given the current rate of conversion, I am not sure that there will be any reduction whatsoever in the amount of lead in people's blood or in the health hazards. Although cars are undergoing conversion, more cars are coming on to our roads and more mileage is being covered. I wonder how much impact the Government's present measures are having on the problem we are seeking to tackle.

Mr. Roger King: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman and I think that he is painting an unduly pessimistic picture. He will recall that the European Commission decreed that the amount of lead in leaded fuel

should be reduced dramatically from 1982 onwards from something like 0·04 mg/ml down to 0·015. That is a dramatic reduction of about 70 per cent. in lead emissions into the atmosphere, without taking into account the impact of the general provision of lead-free petrol. So over a number of years, the Government, with the European Commission, have been playing an active part in addressing the issue, and lead levels have reduced dramatically. We are seeking to eliminate the final few per cent.

9.30 pm

Mr. Taylor: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, but I do not consider that we have gone far enough. I do not believe that the measures in the Bill will achieve what the Government consider necessary. I do not think that we should be debating whether there is a problem. Certainly Ministers believe that there is a problem. I am trying to encourage a Government who take a certain amount of pride in radical solutions to be a little more radical in addressing the problem. The Prime Minister could gain publicity points by saying that she is putting a tiger, or a tigress, into people's tanks—she would think that that would be an appropriate expression for her. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not seek to use the debate to reopen the discussion on whether we need to do something about it. The public and the Government appear to acknowledge that.

I turn from the financial incentives to the need to generate adequate information and publicity. There remains too much ignorance among motorists and others about the costs involved in making the necessary changes and the ease with which those changes can often be made. I do not believe that the problem is simply financial, although I have discussed that at some length. Despite the fact that, according to the survey to which I have referred, four out of five people acknowledge the problem, I suspect that there is insufficient recognition of how easy it is to tackle it, and the fact that, once converted, a car can still use four-star petrol and there are unlikely to be problems unless a car is fitted with a catalytic converter. All those subjects are insufficiently explained.

Our debates tend to concentrate on four-wheeled vehicles, but in my constituency two-star petrol has virtually disappeared as petrol companies will not deliver it, so most garages provide four-star petrol or lead-free petrol and nothing else. Many people are getting in touch with me—and I have written to Ministers at the Department of Energy—about their motor cycles, their lawn mowers and garden implements that they have wheeled out in the recent sunshine; they cannot get the fuel that they have been buying for years. There is virtually no information available to them. A local newspaper recently published an article asking the local motor cycle garage and lawn mower sales point for advice. Their advice was that they were considering the matter, that they were reasonably sure about modern machines being able to run on lead-free petrol, but, apart from that, they did not like to advise anyone and they said that people should refer to the manufacturer. Clearly, that is not a good position for those people.

The Government should adopt the recommendations of CLEAR and spend money on advertising to explain the benefits and the costs of conversion and put in the same efforts that they are making to explain the poll tax that we debated earlier today. Hon. Members acknowledge the problem, but we must decide how to solve it as rapidly as possible. Amendments Nos. 11 and 12 show clearly that we can move forward by giving people a financial incentive within a time scale to which they are likely to respond.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I am afraid that I shall have to disappoint the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), because I believe that there is an issue that should divide us. I am against not only the proposed amendments but clause 1, for reasons that I have had the opportunity on previous occasions to dilate on in the House.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) for not being present at the beginning of his speech. I do not know whether he played a significant part in the Labour party's policy review, but as Socialism has been declared off the agenda it will no longer be appropriate to sing the "Red Flag" at the end of its annual conference. We can assume from his speech that it will be replaced by the green flag.

When Ministers and Opposition Front Bench spokesmen unite in favour of a proposal, hon. Members should regard it with the deepest suspicion. I never thought that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury would be charged with the high crime and misdemeanour of seeking to be fashionable. I am afraid that that is the charge that I shall have to lay against him this evening. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made one of the most shameless speeches that I have heard in the six years that I have been an hon. Member. It was a truly disgusting performance, crawling on all fours before the editor of his local newspaper for some cheap mention on a matter that, in other circumstances, he would have disdained. Even he—in what for him was an idiosyncratic speech because it was not idiosyncratic—followed the fashionable nostrums of the time.

Sir Hal Miller: Is not my hon. Friend being a little ungenerous to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who made his maiden constituency speech and should not therefore attract unduly robust criticism?

Mr. Hamilton: I always regarded the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West as being principally himself. One should not confuse his electorate with his constituents. That is something to be avoided, and I understand that my hon. Friend avoids it as often as possible.

There is no case for a differential in the tax rate between leaded or unleaded petrol.

Mr. Budgen: That has finished my hon. Friend's chances of getting a little job.

Mr. Hamilton: I say to my hon. Friend that for him, as for me, it is far too late to be careful.

There is no case for discriminating between leaded and unleaded petrol because there is no evidence that lead in petrol poses any health risk. An article appeared in a journal which I am sure lies on the bedside of all hon. Members—the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*—about relationships between blood lead, behaviour, psychometric and neuropsychological test performance in young children. A sample of 201 inner-city-dwelling children aged five and a half was taken by the university of Birmingham's environment, research

[Mr. Hamilton]

and behaviour research group. I commend it to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. It says:

"Results show that the initial correlations between blood lead and the outcome measures were generally few and low. No significant relationship was found between overall IQ and blood lead and the one marginally significant association found when the sample was split by father's occupation proved non-significant on multivariate analysis."

This latest study merely backs up the numerous studies published over the years to which I referred in a previous speech in this House, made to a somewhat smaller audience at 1.14 am on 4 December 1984. I gave a number of examples of scientific studies which conclusively proved nothing in relation to this matter.

I will remind the Committee briefly of some of those examples. The Medical Research Council, to which the Government listen carefully, reviewed the subject between 1979 and 1983. It said that the published evidence showed that there was no statistically significant association between body lead burdens and IQs after allowance had been made for the confounding factors. In 1983, the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" reviewed 35 surveys carried out in the European Community. Of those, in only three instances was the reference level set by the EC for the lead content of the blood breached. It was shown that in each of the studies, the reason for the breaches had nothing to do with lead emissions into the atmosphere.

Mr. Budgen: Surely all that my hon. Friend is saying is that there may be some doubt about the technical and scientific evidence used to support the incentives that the Government have put into the fiscal system. He is doing a perfectly good service in drawing attention to the uncertainty of the scientific evidence, but as long as the Government give an incentive merely by way of fiscal encouragement and not by the use of the criminal law, there is nothing to complain about. My hon. Friend may, of course, wish to draw this matter to the attention of the wider public, so that they can take his views into account when deciding whether they wish to avail themselves of the fiscal incentive or to buy what they may regard as more effective petrol.

Mr. Hamilton: That is true, but this tax change costs the Treasury £170 million in a full year. I contend that we could have had other tax reductions in its place, such as exempting all Members of Parliament from income tax, which would have had far more demonstrable benefits to society in general by encouraging men of high ability, but of otherwise of no earning power, to come into the House.

There is no evidence for justifying a tax differential of this kind. It is wrong for the burden of proof to be placed on those who say that there is no evidence. The Government are saying that we should try to prove a negative, which we cannot. This is one more unfortunate instance, which we have seen too often in recent years with Governments of all parties, in which the taxation system is being used to dictate the preferences of the consumer.

Mr. Mans: To guide the consumer.

Mr. Hamilton: Perhaps to guide, but in effect to dictate, if we take the same basic attitude about human motivation. The Government are making a mistake—perhaps not a large mistake—and I am sorry that on this occasion we have decided to be slaves to fashion and have moved in an unfortunate direction.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) often expresses minority views in an extreme way. I will say only that to be speaking in opposition to his convinces me that we must be moving in the right direction.

I do not intend to refer to the problem of other vehicle emissions, although lead is only one of the many problems, because the other emissions are not relevant to the debate. The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and other hon. Members referred to the obstacles that prevent people from converting to lead-free petrol and that is valid. But in view of the time, I will not pursue those matters, nor the fact that there are causes of lead poisoning other than vehicle emissions.

This simple amendment deals with a principle that is accepted by both the Government and the Opposition—that to encourage the use of lead-free petrol, an incentive should be provided in the price. We are debating a question of degree. The Labour party's amendment would increase the size of that incentive slightly, while the SLD amendment would make an even greater concession.

9.45 pm

Given that there is such a degree of agreement, I suggest that the best course for the Government to take would be to accept amendment No. 1, which embodies the middle-of-the-road approach. They could thus avoid dividing the Committee. It would be sensible not to argue on this occasion about which party is the greener and about whether the SLD is greener than the Greens. We are talking about very small sums. I hope that, in view of the Government's Budget surplus, they will see the wisdom of conceding that the Labour party is right and accepting the amendment.

On 21 February the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, sent the Chancellor a letter which was issued as a press release. The Select Committee was not politically divided; the Chairman's letter received the support of both sides of the Committee. The Chairman of the Select Committee told the Chancellor that he supported the action previously taken by the Government but that he was concerned that there had not been a sufficient increase in the take-up of lead-free petrol. The letter said:

"The purpose of this letter, which has the support of my Committee, is to urge you to make a substantial increase in the duty differential, namely, to at least 12p per gallon, which the oil companies should be required to pass on to the motorist in full."

The amendment would bring us nearer to that figure of at least 12p. The Government should acknowledge the unanimity of the Select Committee on the Environment. They should accept our amendment and thus avoid the need for a Division.

Mr. Michael Brown: Unfortunately, my views and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) are not the same on this occasion. Perhaps I can explain why. In December 1984, my hon. Friend presented a petition from the residents of Tatton and Eddisbury for redundancy payments for Associated Octel workers who had been made redundant due to the Government's policies on lead in petrol. My hon. Friend was representing

his constituency interests. I, on the other hand, represent a constituency that contains the Conoco and Lindsey oil refineries.

Hon. Members have spoken about the need to move more quickly. I have to point out to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) that we could not move more quickly in my constituency until we had built that catalytic cracker at Immingham in my constituency at a cost of £80 million. We had to do that so that we could make unleaded petrol for use in the tanks of garages all round the country. It takes two years to build a catalytic cracker for oil refineries such as Conoco, so the Government must be acquitted of the charge of not moving quickly enough.

The amendments should be rejected. The Government have been shown the way to encourage people, but we should be careful about going too far too fast.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) talked about the cheapness of conversion. I will willingly take my 20-year old Land-Rover and my eight-year old Jaguar to his constituency if they can be converted to use unleaded petrol for £4·95 each.

It has been a good debate. The Government have struck just the right balance, and we should congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what he is doing.

Mr. Lilley: The amendments call for us to do more of what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done in the past three Budgets. Most amendments are critical. However, Miss Boothroyd, like your colleague Mr. McWilliam, you are a noted music lover. You will know that the calls of "encore" at the end of a concert are primarily expressions of praise rather than demands for an action replay of Mahler's Fifth. I take the spirit behind the amendments primarily as praise for what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done in increasing the differential to about 14p, not the lower figures that were given by the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor).

The reason the pump price differential tends to be only about 10p is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said, that there are considerable costs in producing lead-free petrol as against leaded petrol.

Praise from any quarter is welcome, particularly when it comes from the Opposition. It is most unexpected when it comes from my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I am grateful to him for it. I suspect that his praise is in the same spirit as that of the great Bacon, from my constituency, who talked of "laudande praecipere"—to praise in order to teach. I agree that we should not use the criminal law to encourage the use of lead-free petrol and are right to proceed by the means we have adopted.

We have got it right and been successful. Since the Budget, the response to the announced changes has been more dramatic than we dared hope. The market share of lead-free petrol has more than doubled—from 6·4 per cent. immediately before the Budget to 14·4 per cent. a month later. The number of filling stations selling lead-free petrol increased dramatically from 30 per cent. before the Budget to about 50 per cent. after the Budget. I assure the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) that it is continuing to increase at the rate of about 250 a week. The hon. Gentleman will be able to work out that that is about 1,000 a month. Given about 20,000 filling stations, that is an extra 5 per cent. a month. The hon. Gentleman's target of 60 per cent. by next year seems to be easily attainable.

The major reason for the rapid increase in the number of petrol stations stocking lead-free petrol is the measure that the *Financial Times* described as a masterstroke, whereby the price of two-star petrol has increased to that of four-star petrol. As a result, the share taken by two-star, which was already falling and had fallen to 6 per cent. before the Budget, has fallen to about 0·6 per cent. and it has effectively disappeared from most forecourts in the country. Customs and Excise has had to introduce special concessions to petrol companies that have had to return unsaleable two-star and three-star petrol and sought duty remission on it.

Mr. Adley: What will we do for our lawn mowers in two or three years if we cannot get two-star petrol?

Mr. Lilley: It is almost unprecedented for any hon. Member to ask a question for that reason. Most motor cycle and similar engines can take two-star petrol. If they cannot, they can take four-star leaded petrol, but it is appropriate to ask a dealer or garage if one has a particularly rarefied form of engine.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister will recall that I referred to that matter. The picture is not quite as straightforward as he paints it. Many people who use four-star petrol will see a considerable reduction in the life expectancy of their machines. Simply to refer people to manufacturers is somewhat inadequate. Much effort has been made for motor vehicles. Will the Minister see whether some effort can be made to help those who are concerned about motor cycles and garden machinery?

Mr. Lilley: Perhaps the hon. Member for Truro will welcome the fact that we have not accepted the advice of the hon. Member for Wrexham to ban the sale of two-star petrol. It will remain on sale, so there is the possibility that it will continue to exist.

Another important measure of the changes since the Budget is that Halfords earlier this year was adjusting to lead-free petrol some 200 cars a week. Since the Budget, as a result of its excellent campaign with the *Today* newspaper, it is adjusting some 6,000 a week at a cost of less than £10 each.

As a result of those changes, I can inform the House that we have increased our estimate of the likely share taken by lead-free petrol by the end of this year, which we had expected to rise to about 15 per cent. It has already reached 14·4 per cent., so we expect that by the end of the year it will have risen to 20 to 25 per cent. I see no reason why by this time next year it should not have reached the target of 30 per cent. that was suggested by the hon. Member for Wrexham.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I have not enough time to take further intervention.

We are already the fourth highest country in the list of users of lead-free petrol and we are rising rapidly up that list. I hope that that will be welcomed by hon. Members. It is still, nevertheless, necessary for us to dispel the myths about the use of lead-free petrol, and thereby increase the uptake of the fuel. Two thirds of all vehicles on the road

[Mr. Lilley]

at present can make use of lead-free petrol either already or as a result of a cheap adjustment, which is sometimes available free, but rarely costs more than £20. Those who switch to lead-free petrol can mix with it or change back to leaded petrol if they wish or if lead-free petrol is not available. Most tests have shown no discernible loss of performance in vehicles using lead-free petrol.

The Government since the Budget have given a boost to lead-free petrol with a £1 million publicity campaign. I believe that the Opposition will welcome that use of Government money to get the facts over.

The differential in price at the pumps should in due course widen. At present, about 10p of the 14p cost advantage is generally passed on to the customer. As the uptake of lead-free petrol increases and the overheads of the original cost of producing it are more widely spread, it should be possible for the petrol companies to pass on an increased proportion of that 14p differential.

Mr. Wilson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lilley: I have already said that I shall not.

We believe that the United Kingdom has now reached a position where the rate of improvement in the take-up of lead-free petrol has reached a process of self-sustaining growth and that the present level of benefit for lead-free petrol is at about the desirable level. It is the highest in Europe, apart from Denmark, and therefore quite satisfactory.

Dr. Marek: I have already said what the Labour party policy is, but I must say at this stage that I am not completely against what the Economic Secretary has said. In his statement there has been the expectation that the Government will reach the targets that I set them for the sale and the availability of unleaded petrol. I welcome that statement and I look forward to those targets being achieved.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment asked the Government to ensure that there would be a 12p differential between leaded and unleaded petrol and to require the oil companies to pass that on to the motorists. In that respect, we do not believe the Government have gone far enough.

Two Aunt Sallies have been raised. First, the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that I had talked about further measures and then implied that we would set the police on the motorists to check whether they had unleaded petrol in their tanks. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are far better ways of ensuring that motorists use unleaded petrol. Secondly, the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) declared his interest, or had it declared for him by his hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). He said that he had employees involved in making the lead for leaded petrol. Perhaps he should have tried to redeploy those employees instead of allowing them to be made redundant.

We do not think that the Government have gone far enough. That is why we shall seek to press our amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 149, Noes 215.

Division No. 194] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Henderson, Doug
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, John P.
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, THE SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *left the Chair.*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

FINANCE BILL

(Clauses Nos. 1, 32, 33, 44, 51 and 138)

Considered in Committee.

[MISS BETTY BOOTHROYD *in the Chair*]

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill (Clauses 1, 32, 33, 44, 51, and 138), reported without amendment; to lie upon the Table.

WAYS AND MEANS

VALUE ADDED TAX (OVERPAYMENTS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about refunding overpayments of value added tax.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Personal Equity Plans

10.16 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move,

That the Personal Equity Plan Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 469), dated 14th March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th March, be revoked.

The statutory instrument consolidates the position in relation to personal equity plans. It also enshrines within the consolidation changes announced by the Chancellor in his Budget in March. The changes formed a major part of the Chancellor's Budget speech, yet they are not formally part of the Finance Bill, because personal equity plans are covered by regulation rather than by primary legislation. However, the House should debate PEPs and, in particular, the changes which the Chancellor has brought in, in order, if nothing else, to expose just how generous the Government are in their provisions for equity portfolios, to a certain extent to the disadvantage of other forms of saving.

Let me for a moment chart the history of personal equity plans. The Chancellor announced the introduction of the plans in his Budget on 18 March 1986. They were brought in as a tax incentive to encourage savings through the purchase of shares. Anyone over 18 could invest at that stage up to £2,400 a year in a PEP. Provided the shares were held for a minimum period of between 12 months and two years, any capital gains and reinvested dividends were to be free of tax. The scheme started on 1 January 1987.

In his Budget speech three months later, the Chancellor reported on the progress of PEP schemes:

"In the first month of the scheme, more than 2,000 people a day took out personal equity plans, many of them first-time investors, as I had hoped."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 824.]

A year later, in his 1988 Budget speech, the Chancellor again reviewed progress on PEPs:

"Over a quarter of a million people took out PEPs in 1987".—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988;, Vol. 129, c. 1004.]

One can tell immediately from the figures that the take-up of PEPs had fallen off in the later months of 1987 compared with the early months.

The annual limit was raised in the 1988 Budget from £2,400 to £3,000, and the amount which could be invested in a unit trust or an investment trust in Scotland was increased from £420 to £540. A number of other changes took place in August 1988 and January 1989, but despite the changes that were made in the Budget last year, and despite the changes that have subsequently occurred, the take-up of PEPs has noticeably flagged in recent years.

In that respect, let me quote from a note on personal equity plans supplied to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) by the Library:

"Despite the Chancellor's optimism over the introduction of PEPs, other commentators view them as less successful. The Independent described 1987 as the year PEPs 'fell flat', and the Times headed its article 'Birthday blues for unpopular PEPs'. Figures for 1988 given by the Inland Revenue are that 100,000 schemes were taken out and £150 million invested in such schemes. No effort is made to distinguish first-time investors but according to a number of financial journalists, the general feeling of the institutions involved in PEPs is that very few are first-time investors. On the whole the main attraction of PEPs is to the richer investors who find PEPs a useful way of repackaging existing portfolios."

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is pleased or displeased by the fact that there has been a less than dramatic take-up of PEPs, but does he accept that one reason for the relatively low figures is simply the administrative problems that many City firms have had in introducing them? Therefore, does he accept that the proposals in the Finance Bill are to be more than welcomed and should lead to a dramatic increase in their acceptability?

Mr. Smith: There are, as the hon. Gentleman will know, no proposals in the Finance Bill this year, because it does not cover PEPs. There are proposals in the regulations that we are debating which, to a certain extent, ease the administration of the PEP schemes. On some of those I have little quarrel with the Government, but on some of them I do, and I shall deal with those in a moment.

One reason for the relatively low take-up of PEPs by first-time investors is that the capital gains tax advantages which apply to PEPs are only of any use to investors who have already used up their £5,000 capital gains tax-free allowance. For many small savers, certainly virtually all first-time perchasers of equities, such a proviso does not exist.

The Chancellor announced a number of changes in his Budget this year which are enshrined in the regulations. Let me briefly outline those changes. First, the annual contribution limit goes up by a substantial amount, from £3,000 to £4,800. Secondly, the allocation to unit trusts or to investment trusts goes up by an even more substantial percentage from within that overall total—£540 before to £2,400 now.

Thirdly, the form of contribution changes. Before, all contributions to PEPs had to be in cash. Now, under these regulations, they can be either in cash or in new issue shares.

Fourthly, the minimum holding period which was, under the previous regulations, one year, is now abolished. Fifthly, the cash holding rules which used to provide for a figure of £300 after the first year, has also been abolished.

Those changes represented an attempt on the part of the Chancellor to revive a scheme that was flagging before the Budget, and a number of commentators in the immediate aftermath of the Budget noted precisely that. *The Financial Times* on 18 March headed its article:

"PEPs are given the kiss of life."

The Times on the same day headed its article:

"Personal equity plans pepped up thanks to Chancellor's tinkering."

Before coming to the criticisms that my hon. Friends and I have of a number of aspects of the regulations, I have two questions for the Financial Secretary. The first relates to the fifth report of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. That Committee found that the wording of regulation 5(1) was unclear. It requested a memorandum from the Department on the subject. That memorandum was forthcoming, after which the Select Committee concluded:

"The Committee feels that although the intention of the Regulations is sensible, the drafting is not and that the provision can certainly be read as requiring a plan manager to carry out all transactions at the price he could obtain for the investments, namely the bid price."

Will the Government amend regulation 5(1) to clarify the meaning, in accordance with the advice of that Committee?

My second question relates to the press release issued by the Inland Revenue on 3 May, in which it announced that it would be relaxing the 75 per cent. United Kingdom

equity requirement for unit trusts and investment trusts. This issue has been causing concern to many in the equities industry, especially in Scotland, in relation to investment trusts. My attention had already been drawn to the subject by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). Will the Government introduce the further regulations in due course, and, if so, when? When we see the contents of those regulations we will know whether to express doubts about the proposed relaxation.

We have three main criticisms of the regulations. The first concerns the inclusion of new privatisation shares in PEP portfolios. The Financial Secretary wrote on 26 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I fear that his letter was somewhat disingenuous on the subject. He said that it had always been possible in theory within personal equity plans to include privatised issues of shares. But under the processes of privatisation—the need to bid for shares and the uncertainty over the allocation that one will receive—the inclusion of such portfolios of shares within PEPs was difficult to arrange.

The regulations before us make it easier to include privatised issues within a portfolio. They enable an application to be made, and however great the allocation turns out to be—provided the overall ceiling is not exceeded—that can then be included within the PEP portfolio. That is unacceptable to us. Tax relief will effectively be given both on dividend income and on capital gains income, especially if the £5,000 threshold has already been exceeded, when purchasing privatisation shares. It is nothing more than a bribe to encourage a greater take-up of privatisation issues.

A scrutiny of the performance of privatisation shares in the period since their original issue can be instructive. I put aside the oil and gas industries, which have performed particularly badly because of the impact of the world fuel market, and also British Petroleum, which was affected equally dramatically by the rather gauche timing of the flotation. However, the price of Rolls-Royce shares in April 1987 was 170p but six months later was 136p. The Trustee Savings bank share price on its flotation in September 1986 was 100p, but six months later was 86½p. When the British Airports Authority was floated in July 1987, its share price was 100p, but six months later was 109p. None of them could be described as performing particularly well.

The potential purchaser of a water or electricity share will enjoy not just a knockdown price—we can be certain that the Government will ensure that—but tax bonuses as well.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I find it increasingly difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's line of argument. If the Treasury offered those shares at such a knockdown price, why is it that their prices have fallen further? Is it not the case rather than the Treasury negotiated an extremely good deal, in a variety of market conditions, that was also good for the British taxpayer?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman should have allowed me to develop my argument. In privatisation issues, we have consistently seen an initial under-valuation and a subsequent considerable increase over a short period, but then a downward trend over a longer period.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): If those shares were consistently under-valued, how can the hon. Gentleman maintain his argument that the public get a very bad deal when they invest in privatisation issues?

Mr. Smith: The pattern has been one of initial gains, but in the longer term a number of privatisation issues —not all, because British Telecom, for example, has done very nicely for the people who originally purchased its shares—have not presented such a good picture.

It must also be remembered that the tax relief available under PEPs will be given at the expense of all other taxpayers. The public, who own water and electricity at present, will themselves pay for stripping their own assets; the owners will pay for the disposal of what they now own. It is like paying a burglar a subsidy to raid one's own home. I am sure that there will be some aggressive marketing of PEP packages as part of the forthcoming privatisation issues. The inclusion of those shares within personal equity plans, with all the tax advantages that go with them, is something that we cannot possibly accept.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): If the hon. Gentleman is so anxious that privatisation shares should not be part of PEPs, can he explain why such shares should be considered to be in a separate class from any other investment? If an investor wants to buy shares, he must take the rough with the smooth, and we are giving him tax relief through PEPs on that basis. Why should he be disadvantaged through buying a particular set of shares?

Mr. Smith: Privatisation shares should be regarded differently precisely beause they are public assets being sold to private investors. I do not believe that the public, through their taxes, should subsidise that disposal.

We are very concerned about two further issues. The first is the removal of the one-year rule. The concept of the mature portfolio, which was part of the original thinking behind PEPs, has gone with this change, which could mean a substantial immediate tax-free capital gain from a new share issue, whether privatised or not. Management fees will, of course, place a limit on the benefit to be gained, but the removal of the one-year rule nevertheless offers scope for large-scale wheeling and dealing in shares, to the detriment of the Exchequer and hence of all taxpayers.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. Time is limited, and I know that a number of hon. Members want to speak.

Our other worry is that preferential treatment will be given to equities as compared to other forms of saving. We were told in advance that the Budget would be one for the saver, but the only action that the Chancellor took was to make generous provision in the regulations for equity purchase. Of course we must encourage saving: the Government ought to be all too well aware that personal savings appear to be at an all-time low. But where were the measures in the Budget to stimulate building society investment and sort out some of the inequitable rules relating to building society interest? Where were the provisions to establish regionally based schemes for the more effective financing of industry? Where were the provisions to assist the friendly societies? The preference for equities that the regulations are building into the tax system is, in our view, neither sensible nor just.

[Mr. Smith]

For all those reasons, we believe that the Government must go back to the drawing board. The economy as a whole, and ordinary people wanting to save and invest, deserve better than these regulations.

10.38 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I welcome the opportunity of a debate on the changes announced in personal equity plans. I must say that I marvel at the boldness of the Opposition's promise to vote against the regulations, and I am delighted that they are going to do so.

As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has said, PEPs were first introduced in the 1986 Budget, and despite some pessimistic articles in the financial press, they have played a successful part in achieving our objective of reversing the long-term decline in individual shareholding. Whereas, 10 years ago, only 7 per cent. of the adult population held shares, the figure is now 20 per cent.—one in five of the population—pushing hard to reach a level similar to that in the United States. We regard that as a tremendous achievement, on which we want to build.

In the first year of the scheme, 270,000 schemes were started. As the hon. Gentleman said, in 1988, only 120,000 schemes were taken out. That was a setback, but considering that there had been the biggest correction to the stock market since 1929, it was not all that surprising or disappointing.

I take issue with the Opposition's conviction that we are providing tax relief only for wealthy existing shareholders. The hon. Gentleman chose to quote a stockbroker. I quote a plan manager not from the City of London but from the Bradford and Bingley building society, who found that most investors had never owned shares before, that a majority were women, that semi-skilled and unskilled workers bought more PEPs than managers and professionals, and that most invested well below the maximum possible.

Nevertheless, it was clear from discussions at the end of last year that a number of managers wanted changes in the administration of the scheme and felt that some requirements were unnecessary and added to the cost of administration. Unit trust groups keen to market the idea found that it was uneconomical to offer unit trust—only PEPs with a limit of £540 a year. That is why we introduced changes increasing the overall limit to £4,800 and substantially increasing the annual limit on a unit or investment trust to £2,400. The philosophy behind those changes was that we had increased the overall limit for direct investment in shares, that unit and investment trusts were a good way to get into the market and that we wanted a total limit that was economic for plan managers.

At the same time, we thought it only right to require that unit and investment trusts should invest mostly in United Kingdom equities. I know that that has created disappointment in some quarters, but that was the original requirement of the scheme for direct investment, and it would have been inconsistent not to apply it to unit trusts and investment trusts.

As the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, in future, investors may subscribe to a new public issue of shares, and then transfer them into a PEP. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) asked in an intervention, why not? We want to help not only privatisation new issues but all new issues, and it is right that they should be allowed in PEPs. Finally, we simplified the administration in a number of ways, so that it will no longer be necessary to take out a new plan each year. I believe that the administrative changes that we have introduced, in addition to the changes in the aggregate amounts that may be invested, will do a tremendous amount to boost the popularity of the scheme.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The Minister will recall that in the Budget debate in 1986, the Chancellor said that PEPs were

"specially designed to encourage smaller savers, and particularly those who may never previously have invested in equities in their lives."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 178.]

Will the Minister contradict the findings of the Institute of Fiscal Studies that only one third of those investing in PEPs were first-time investors in equities?

Mr. Lamont: Learned though the Institute of Fiscal Studies is on tax matters, I am not quite sure that its opinion should be considered better than that of PEP managers at the Bradford and Bingley building society who are actually promoting the scheme, know who their customers are and have stated that in their part of the market many investors are new, first-time investors.

Although the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury tried to assert the contrary, I stress that the tax relief does benefit small investors. The income tax relief can certainly benefit those paying the basic rate of tax. For example, someone with £4,800 invested and paying the basic rate of income tax would save about £60 a year, based on a return of 5 per cent. producing dividends of £240 a year.

We notice that a number of plan managers are marketing high-income plans and investing PEPs in shares offering high yields. That will be of special importance and attraction to the small investor. As regulations now make it possible for investment trusts to offer capital and income shares in a PEP, the attraction to small investors will increase further.

The Budget changes have caught the imagination and enthusiasm of plan managers and investors. The largest plan manager, Lloyd's, has taken £12 million of new investment since the Budget. A number of firms that had stopped offering PEPs have announced that they will return to the market—such as Framlington, Fidelity and Barclayshare. A number of new plan managers have entered the market offering a range of new products. I welcome the new mood of confidence, which shows that the changes have been welcomed and will be a considerable success.

We have received representations from the investment trusts about the new rule that from April 1990 unit or investment trusts must be 75 per cent. invested in shares that qualify for direct investment in a PEP. I gave the explanation for that change and believe that it is a reasonable requirement, given the greatly increased opportunities for trusts. We obviously do not wish to harm existing investment trusts within the original limit of £750, which used to be the alternative to a full plan. Some of those investment trusts did not meet the 75 per cent.

requirement. We did not wish to harm the investment trusts that marketed their product under the old regime by suddenly imposing a new rule on them.

We therefore announced that it will be possible to continue to invest £750 in a unit or investment trust that does not meet the 75 per cent. United Kingdom requirement. It will be an alternative to investing up to £2,400 with the 75 per cent. restriction. We announced that unquoted shares in a unit or investment trust portfolio may count towards the 75 per cent. requirement, which will especially help those who specialise in venture capital.

Mr. Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will not the Financial Secretary have increasing difficulties squaring the United Kingdom equity limitation with movement to free capital in Europe? Will it not increasingly be regarded as discriminatory for non-United Kingdom shares to be singled out in this way?

Mr. Lamont: We are not infringing any EC law. A number of countries that offer fiscal incentives for investment have imposed the same limits as we have.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred to the comments by the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments about the drafting of the regulations, which of course I take seriously. It is a relatively minor point, but we shall consider making a drafting change.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked whether we shall amend regulations to deal with the other changes that we have made. The answer is yes, and we shall be doing so well in advance of the April 1990 start date for the new 75 per cent. content and the other aspects of the regulations.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend deal with the allegation that the Government are having to bribe investors on privatisation issues? I spent most of January and February on the Committee considering the Water Bill listening to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) suggesting that we are giving away assets. I therefore cannot follow why it is necessary to bribe investors.

Mr. Lamont: It is hardly worth considering that allegation, but as it has been raised I should deal with it.

The hon. Gentleman is living in something of a dream world. He claims that there are people making vast capital gains on the stock market and privatisation issues, yet in the next breath he says that all the privatisation issues have been an enormous flop. I was interested to note that his speech corresponded with the press release he distributed this afternoon. He regarded the fact that we were removing the one-year rule as an enormous gift to our friends in the City, and said that getting rid of the rule would allow substantial tax-free capital gains for all those who
"wheel and deal in shares".

The hon. Gentleman is obviously not aware that it has always been possible to sell shares with a PEP either in the first year or subsequently. I assume that he objects to the fact that in future the proceeds need not be kept in the plan for a full 12 months. That is true, but tax relief in a PEP continues to grow the longer people keep their investments in the plan. We got rid of the 12-month rule simply because it was a wholly unnecessary and bureaucratic imposition on plan managers. The average amount invested in a PEP is £1,700. If the hon. Gentleman believes that there are geniuses around who can invest £1,700 in any year, walk away with huge tax-free sums and live happily ever after, he is living in an unreal world. The hon. Gentleman has muttered many incantations from the book of common prejudice, but he has not given us a serious analysis of PEPs tonight.

The Opposition are terrified about ownership. A few weeks ago, in an article in *The Independent*, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) described how, when he was canvassing, people came up to him in his constituency. As they owned a handful of British Telecom shares, they talked to him as though they were relatives of the Duke of Westminster. What a terrifying development!

The Labour party is terrified of ownership, because it will make people independent. Worse than that, ownership will make the Labour party's own policies utenable. What was it that forced Labour to change its policies on housing? It was ownership in housing. What forced it recently to change its industrial policy on social ownership and nationalisation? It is now committed only to taking back into public ownership British Telecom and water. What is the reason for that? Privatisation and wider share ownership have brought about that change. When water is privatised, Labour will have to retreat from its promise to renationalise it as well if it wishes to have a slight chance of being elected again. The trouble is that Labour Members are half-converted. They are not fully converted to the post-Socialist society, but they should become full converts and follow the logic of their own doubts and quandaries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) asked about the tax reliefs being made available for privatisations and new issues. I have already said that tax relief is being made available for all new issues. It is not necessary for us to give tax relief to make privatisation issues a success, as our record in getting issues away in the companies we have privatised demonstrates clearly. If Opposition Members believe that the privatisation of water depends on tax relief, that shows how little they have learnt. I have not the slightest doubt that there will be tremendous interest in the privatisation of water. Our changes will enlarge the scope of PEPs. They are designed not specifically for privatisation, but to improve the product of PEPs.

The Opposition have the wrong idea about PEPs and they have a wholly wrong idea about how valuable the tax relief is. Some of them have shown that they do not even understand how the tax relief works; they are under the impression that one receives tax relief simply for investing. That is not true; there is no subsidy for investing and no front-end relief—which is a criticism that some of my hon. Friends have made in the past. In the short term, there is no saving for investors; they have to obtain the dividends and capital gains first. One has to be a long-term investor to benefit from the tax reliefs. The idea that the tax relief on dividends—on £1,700—is absolutely to the rich shows that, despite all their efforts to catch up with the changes in the world and to change their policies, Labour Members are still miles and miles away from reality.

[Mr. Lamont]

Personal equity plans are playing an important part in widening and deepening individual share ownership. I believe that the changes that we have made will give them a tremendous boost, and I am utterly confident of their success.

10.55 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister will know that I have been a critic of the PEP scheme from the start—but entirely from the standpoint of someone who thinks that it is the basis of a very good idea and that its essential purpose is right. I would argue that the Minister is only half converted to the objective of wider share ownership or he would develop the PEP scheme further.

Two excellent objectives form the basis of the PEP scheme. The first—increasing saving—is of immediate economic importance. There are overriding reasons why we should seek to attract more saving at present. It is one of the instruments that we could put into the Chancellor's golf bag to add to his one-club interest rate policy.

The second purpose of the PEP scheme is not merely to deepen but to widen share ownership. Although the widening of share ownership made significant progress with the privatisation issues, it seems to have stopped at around the 20 per cent. mark and at a point where most of the new shareholders hold only one or two stocks. A real widening of share ownership would result in a large proportion of the population having a direct stake in the ownership of individual British companies and a direct involvement in their success. That objective is still to be attained, and I hope that the Minister will address himself to it.

PEPs have not gone far enough to help in meeting that objective, for two reasons. One reason is dealt with to a large extent in the present proposals—to date, the high management costs of the scheme have been a disincentive even to offering and marketing PEPs and must have played a part in the very low take-up rate in the past year. I welcome the improvements that the Government are making, which remove a whole lot of unnecessary limitations on the way in which a PEP scheme is operated.

The other main reason why the scheme is not fulfilling its purpose is that the reliefs available under it have been mainly advantageous to those who have sufficient capital gains tax opportunities to benefit from it—those who have exhausted their other sources of relief. It is not a real advantage to those who come nowhere near to using up their capital gains tax limit. No new investor is likely to need the extra capital gains tax relief. It is the investor who has used up his £5,000 worth of capital gains tax relief who is the primary beneficiary. Other investors have only the tax relief on their dividends which, in any stock market investment, must be only a small part of the investor's expectation of reward.

The Minister came right to the point when he said that he had been criticised—he has certainly been criticised by my party—for not considering the possibiity of a front-ended form of relief for the PEP scheme. The changes that the Government are making will lead to an increased take-up of PEPs—because of the reduction in management costs, the changes in the total investment limit and the time limit. The marketing of PEP mortgages will take off rapidly and they will be widely used by those who are aware of their tax advantages and likely to benefit from them. But the PEP scheme will still not be attracting the large numbers of people whom we want to induce to save and whom we want to own British industry. Although there are arguments in favour of the unit trust aspect of the proposal, that will also probably dilute the extent to which the scheme introduces people to ownership of shares in individual companies. Therefore, we should examine the scheme again to see whether we can still fulfil that objective at the same time.

It remains my view that the most likely way of achieving that real widening is to offer a form of front-end relief as a supplement to the PEP scheme—perhaps a secondary scheme—a scheme alongside it, or an alternative scheme. Unless the Treasury does that, we will find from the PEP scheme, in the Chancellor's words, not a widening but a deepening of share ownership. That is a much more limited objective. The Minister should look at the original objectives.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Given the hon. Gentleman's party's conviction about wider share ownership, does he agree that privatisation has been the main means of widening share ownership in this country? Therefore, his party should accept that as the most likely way of continuing the share ownership revolution.

Mr. Beith: It is a means of widening share ownership, but it has fundamental disadvantages, one of which is that it has transferred monopolies from the public sector to the private sector without changing their monopolistic character. We had that experience with British Gas. We are experiencing it with the electricity industry—a badly conceived privatisation, the details of which it would be out of order for me to go into now.

There are good arguments for taking some industries out of the public sector, particularly if the income generated by doing so is reinvested in other parts of the economy. One of the Government's failings is that they see the gains from privatisation as something out of which to make a Budget surplus to be used on current expenditure, rather than as a means of reinvesting in the economy.

There is no gainsaying that one of the consequences of privatisation has been the widening of share ownership. It would be ridiculous to deny that. But I want to see it go much further. I want to see wider ownership of shares in British manufacturing industry, which has never been in public ownership and which therefore cannot be reached by that means.

The advantages of front-end tax reliefs are that they would prove a more immediate attraction to people who have not previously contemplated saving at all or putting their savings into industry. They would apply directly to those who have no prospect of using up capital gains tax relief and, therefore, do not regard that relief as a particularly important incentive.

If the Government are serious about widening share ownership to a larger number of people and also making it a means of increasing savings, they must change or extend the character of the PEP scheme. For those reasons, I am critical of some of the things that the Government have not done. My criticisms are not because of hostility to the scheme's objectives; in its modified form it can at least play some part.

11.2 pm

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I welcome the Opposition's decision to initiate this debate, if only to demonstrate that the Labour party has not changed one whit, judging by the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) about privatisation issues. I found his remarks quite extraordinary. Just as members of the Labour party were

[Sir John Stanley]

conspicuous in queueing up for the benefits of privatisation when council houses were offered for sale, so I have every confidence that they will queue up to take advantage of privatisation issues to put them into the PEP mark 2. They will be surprised if Opposition Members vote against the regulations.

I welcome the PEP mark 2. As my right hon. Friend was frank enough to admit, the PEP mark 1 did not completely fulfil our expectations. I recognise that the stock market crash in 1987 certainly was a factor in that, but it was not the only factor, and the PEP mark 1 was undoubtedly too complex and restrictive. There was too great an element of Inland Revenue nannying. Certainly, several fund managers—probably the great majority—found that it simply was not an economic proposition for them to run PEP schemes because of the administrative costs involved compared with the relatively small volume. PEP mark 2 is certainly an improvement.

I ask my right hon. Friend to consider two further changes that would remove two restrictions.

My right hon. Friend announced on 3 May in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) that PEP mark 3 is around the corner, and he has confirmed that tonight. That being so, I hope that he will give consideration to the matters to which I wish to draw attention, especially the two that came within regulation 6(3)—the 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. rules. The 50 per cent. rule prevents an individual investor from investing more than half of his annual PEP investment in investment trusts and unit trusts. The rule is unnecessary, anomalous and pretty undesirable. If it is possible for someone to put 100 per cent. of his annual investment into ordinary shares, why should he be restricted to only 50 per cent. of his investment for unit trusts and investment trusts?

My right hon. Friend has made some welcome changes for investment trusts and he has referred to the benefits of widening the changes to embrace split level trusts and the attraction of high-income trusts for first-time investors. If unit and investment trusts are a good investment medium for first-time investors, and they are, surely we should not place a 50 per cent. limit on that form of investment. I think that my right hon. Friend will be the first to agree that many first-time investors who go to their independent financial advisers with only £1,000 or £2,000 to invest will be advised by those advisers to put their money into investment trusts or unit trusts so that they may enjoy a reasonable spread of investment without incurring high initial purchase changes, which is the result of putting penny packets of investment into ordinary shares.

As the regulations are drafted, I believe that they will run contrary to the advice that independent financial advisers will give to those who come to them, especially if they are first-time investors or those of relatively modest means.

I ask my right hon. Friend to consider again the 75 per cent. rule. I suggest that it, too, is highly anomalous. As I understand it, the intention behind the regulations is to produce some form of direct imperative to invest in the United Kingdom. As my right hon. Friend knows, however, the ordinary shares that can be part of any PEP portfolio can include a huge range of United Kingdom-quoted companies. Many of those companies, not least oil companies, natural resource companies and internatonal conglomerates, have the majority of their assets and earnings outside the United Kingdom. As the regulations are drafted, it would be possible to construct a PEP where the entire investment was placed in United Kingdom quoted companies which had 75 per cent. or more of their assets and earnings outside the United Kingdom. However, when one came to invest in a unit trust or investment trust that had 74 per cent. of its investments inside the United Kingdom, the regulations would debar the investment. I suggest that that is anomalous.

I have some sympathy with the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in an intervention. As the Government have, rightly, been radical enough to abolish exchange controls, and as they are on the brink of entering into a single capital market within the European Community, fiscal nationalism on a pretty small issue seems to be rather unecessary. I hope that my right hon. Friend will examine closely the 75 per cent. rule. The PEP scheme will be much improved if that and the 50 per cent. restriction on unit trusts and investment trusts are abolished.

11.9 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): We are debating another example of what used to be called social engineering. Perhaps I should be sorry to revert to that phrase, but I see that the Financial Secretary is amused. Social engineering means the use of the tax system to further various political, economic and ideological ends for the purposes and aims of the Government of the day.

This is not a debate on the Finance Bill but it is closely allied to such legislation. Yesterday we debated the use of the tax system to encourage private health care and this afternoon we debated clause 44 of the Finance Bill and the use of the tax system both for the business expansion scheme and to try to encourage the provision of rented accommodation in the private sector. Again, the tax system is apparently to be used to iron out anomalies and to try to revive the private rented sector.

The tax system is now to be used to enable certain individuals to buy shares on the stock exchange and to get tax relief for doing so. Perhaps most Conservative Members were not Members of the House in those days, but some of us—*[Interruption.]* Of course it is tax relief——

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): There is no tax relief for buying shares.

Mr. Davies: If one gets tax relief on dividends from the shares, one is paying no tax—*[Interruption.]* Well, perhaps it is not tax relief; it is tax exemption. I am sorry, I had better be more precise in my language. We are talking about total tax exemption on dividends on the PEP scheme. If the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) wants to be pedantic, she can be. The policy is to grant tax reliefs.

The Conservative party used to tell us that tax reliefs, tax incentives or tax breaks, as the Americans call them, were justified only because of the high rates of taxation under Labour Governments. The Conservative party said that they were justified then because they ameliorated the harsh tax rates. We can all remember that what used to be called "unearned income" was taxed at 95 or 97 per cent. when the investment income surcharge was applied to it

—*[Interruption.]* I am advised that the rate was 98 per cent. It was argued that because of those rates we must have all these reliefs. However, we were told that once the tax rates came down to reasonable levels there would be no need for the reliefs. We were told that everything would be neutral and that incentives would not be given to either one group or another.

We have had those tax reductions. Unearned income became known as investment income and the tax on it was no longer any different from the tax on earnings. That is the position today, except that the top tax rate has gone down to 40 per cent. Yet we apparently still need the reliefs and the incentives. Indeed, under this scheme there is no tax at all on dividends—I am correct in that, am I not? —yet there are taxes on earnings at 25 and 40 per cent. We are moving in the opposite direction—we are taxing unearned income in certain categories at a level lower than that at which we tax earnings.

That is extraordinary coming from the Conservative party which has preached tax and fiscal neutrality. However, we know what this is really all about. Although a few people at the lower end of the scale will benefit from such schemes, the schemes will most benefit those whom the Prime Minister describes as "our own people". I notice that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South is agreeing with that.

As I have said, no tax will be paid on dividends and no tax will be paid on capital gains. The Financial Secretary told us that that is to encourage savings. I thought that the function of the interest rate system was to encourage savings. I should have thought that interest rates at twice the rate of inflation and the highest in Europe—it is possible to get 13 per cent. today—would encourage savings. I do not see why it is necessary to try to get more. Why be more greedy? Why try to find more tax reliefs and more income from savings?

The scheme is, in fact, a confession that popular capitalism has failed to deliver savings. Popular capitalism —the free market, and no interference in the market whatsoever—has not delivered savings under this Government; it has delivered spend, spend, spend. That means that we now have to use the tax system and to pay money to institutional managers and to the fund managers in the City to try to ameliorate the failure of popular capitalism to encourage saving.

The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) talked about the "nannying" of the Inland Revenue. There are 13 pages in these regulations which I read through earlier. They talk of plans, plan managers, plan investments, qualifying individuals, plans managed in accordance with the regulations, planned investors. There are 13 pages of gobbledegook from the Government who told us that the tax system would be simplified, not complicated. We are also debating this week the longest Finance Bill in history.

The Government talked about fiscal neutrality and tax simplicity, but we received neither. A Government who were, apparently, in favour of fiscal neutrality and tax simplicity, have given us less of both. The main reason for that is that the Government want to assist those they choose to help, and they will try to do so through the tax system.

I do not know whether the Government's policy will encourage savings. It will shift savings from one sector of the economy to another. I doubt whether it will generate extra savings, because that depends on the general economy. Savings cannot be created overnight. As a result of this system, money will leave building societies and go into the new PEP scheme. I doubt whether it will encourage savings, but it will assist a number of people.

The reason for the scheme and for the Financial Secretary talking about savings is that, over the past few years, the Government have run a slack monetary and fiscal policy. If the Government had practised what they preached about monetary discipline, there would be no need for these schemes to try to encourage savings, because the economy would not be run on that basis. The scheme is a consequence of the Government's failure properly to manage their economy and of the Conservative party's desire to use the tax system to assist its own people. Conservative Members who troop into the Lobby tonight to support the regulations will do so because there is money in it for their own people.

11.17 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I say how much Conservative Members welcome the various improvements to the PEP.

I originally intended to come merely to listen to the debate, but I heard so much guff from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and more guff from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), and then I heard my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary speaking with such approbation about the unskilled women of the north of England who are now buying PEPs in such numbers. When I heard this I thought to myself, "My right hon. Friend is talking about me." I am an unskilled woman from the north of England and I have never owned any shares in my life, and on 30 March this year I marched into Lloyds bank in Victoria street and bought a PEP.

I think that PEPs are wonderful, and I would like my right hon. Friend to know that he is absolutely right in what he says about the attractiveness of the PEP scheme to first-time buyers and investors, the person who knows nothing about the stock exchange, does not have a financial adviser, does not read the *Financial Times*, but wants to get into the stock exchange and the stock market to benefit from the tremendous improvement in the capitalist society over which the Government have presided.

In future, this will be the real value of the PEP. It will be one of the best ways into the system for the first-time buyer. On that basis, the changes that are being prayed against today are very important, much more important than the tax incentives that have been described and which are being derided by the Opposition. They are particularly important as privatisation issues gradually draw to a close. We shall reach the stage when we have privatised everything that stays still long enough. It will then be harder for the public, unless they have some easy access to the system, to buy shares. In any case, why should they be restricted to buying shares merely in old, nationalised industries? It is marvellous that, through the PEP system, they should be able to have access to shares in a much wider range of companies.

I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) that the old PEP rule on the proportion that goes into unit trusts is a

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

bureaucratic and undesirable element of restriction that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary should look at.

The old PEP was hampered by excessive bureaucracy and, perhaps, a half-hearted approach. Listening to the Opposition Members who have spoken, I wondered why they oppose the PEPs and have bothered with this prayer. They are wrong about them on one count—no doubt my right hon. Friend will tell them they are wrong on many others, too. They are wrong to think that PEPs are attractive only to people who have used up their existing £5,000 tax exemption on the capital gains tax. The person buying a PEP for the first time who does not own shares has a tremendous incentive to buy one the next year—and the next—and to stay in the system until he accumulates a substantial benefit. That is a major incentive.

My right hon. Friend was undoubtedly right to say that the average tax benefit from the dividends will be about £60 a year. I agree that that is not exactly exciting for most people, including those on average earnings or below. But that is not the incentive; the incentive is to get into the stock exchange system and stay there until the day comes when a person has built up a large portfolio.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) must make up his mind. Perhaps the Labour party's policy review will help him to do so. Everything that he said about PEPs amounted to an advertisement for them and I should have thought that he would welcome them for that reason. The Opposition say that they believe in a share-owning democracy; if so, they should consider PEPs, and the changes to them, marvellous. Either they should make up their minds whether they favour share-owning, or they know what they really think about it and are not telling us, in which case they are lying through their teeth—*[Interruption.]* I said, "Either, or."

I must tell the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, who is a nice bloke—I like him—*[Interruption.]* that when it comes to the next election, and the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends start talking about share ownership and a share-owning democracy, he will have to make it absolutely clear whether he means to leave our shares with us or to take them off us by re-nationalisation and taking away all the rights that we are now acquiring. If he chooses the latter course, he will find it about as popular as taking away our nuclear deterrent, and the people will not vote for it.

I offer my right hon. Friend this thought: we have spent a lot of time considering incentives to the purchasers of PEPs, but we need to think about incentives for the banks, building societies and others who will take on the management of these funds on our behalf. I had to persuade the nice young ladies at the branch of Lloyds in Victoria street to sell me a PEP. They had never heard of it. Having heard my right hon. Friend's Budget speech, I decided that a PEP would be nice to have. A few days later Lloyds took full-page advertisements in the press, telling us that we must buy our PEPs immediately and sign our cheques by 4 pm on the last Friday in March. If not, we could not obtain the current plant.

I marched in, clutching my copy of the advertisement in one hand and cheque book in the other. No one at the branch of Lloyds knew anything about PEPs. They managed to find me a leaflet, and I read through the details of the old scheme, which were all wrong. I told the staff that everything had changed; they said that it had not. The young lady brought her supervisor to see me—also, marvellous to relate, a woman—and she insisted also that the details had not changed. I said to the girl, "Here's my cheque. I want a receipt now, with the date-stamp on it." Three weeks later I received a stereotyped letter from a minion in Lloyds bank stating that I now possessed a PEP.

I have done the bank the honour of giving it my hard-earned £3,000, and I reckon that it should be keener to take our money off us. Somewhere along the line, if the PEP is to be what I hope—the easy way into the stock exchange for the first-time buyer and for people who have no experience of the stock exchange—the people who are managing and selling the schemes had better pull their socks up and do the selling. They should make it easier and more attractive for unskilled northern women like me to go into the banks and get PEPs.

I commend what my right hon. Friend is doing. I look forward to the PEP being an even greater success in future.

11.24 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): When my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) approached the sign of the black horse and got into the bank, she discovered that it was the listening bank and she was able to advise it on PEPs. I hope that it gets its act together soon.

The changes announced in the Budget offer an outstanding marketing opportunity for financial advisers of all kinds. When I listened to the Budget statement I concluded that this was one of the most exciting series of changes made for a long time. The changes in personal equity plans offer people for the first time a real opportunity to build up a tax-free equity portfolio.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) talked about encouraging savings. I do not believe that that is the object of the scheme. It is to encourage investment in equities, which is a different proposition. There is plenty of encouragement for savings with interest rates at their present levels. Building societies do not have a problem, and savings are rising.

The purpose of the scheme is to encourage people to put their money into direct savings in equities, investment trusts and unit trusts. We can make a direct comparison between the tax advantages of putting money into an occupational pension scheme, where it is locked up for a long time but where all the dividends and capital gains are tax-free, and personal equity plans.

I agree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that there will be a big change in this area of the savings market. When people take out a mortgage, they will not go for an institutional way of paying it back through a life policy where the money is locked up. They will put their money into personal equity plans on a regular basis. Over a period of years, as anyone who looks at the tables for unit trusts will see, there will be a rapid accumulation in the value of their investment. They will find that they are in a position to pay off their mortgage much earlier than they might otherwise have been. They will have considerable flexibility which is not available under present arrangements.

That is why the scheme is so exciting. It is not for a month, for six months or even for a year, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith)

thinks; it is for a long period to encourage long-term savings in the equity market. That is what it will do. With modest monthly payments, people can accumulate considerable capital. It is the next step to a property-owning democracy. The Government have been successful in achieving a high percentage of home ownership. The next stage in giving people more security and independence is to give them the opportunity to build up a reasonable amount of equity capital.

I welcome the changes, which will be significant in the long run. Opposition Members do not know how to react to all this, or whether to welcome it. We saw that in the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury from the Front Bench. I think that they will see that there will be considerable benefits and that many new investors will come into this area of the savings market.

I have two detailed comments. First, on the vexed question of the 75 per cent. limit which will apply to unit trusts and investment trusts, I understand why the Treasury wants to introduce a limit. It is right that, primarily, people should be encouraged to invest in United Kingdom equities, but there is the difficulty to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) drew attention—that many United Kingdom companies invest heavily overseas. For example, Hanson plc has about 50 per cent. investment in the United Kingdom and 50 per cent. in the United States. If I chose to invest all my PEP in Hanson shares, I would get full relief even though half the money is going to overseas investment. We can probably think of examples, such as BAT Industries plc, where the proportion of overseas investment is even higher. I could invest in plantation or other companies, where investment is completely overseas. My right hon. Friend might review the limit. A 50 per cent. limit might be more reasonable.

On my second point I am not too sure of my facts, but I want to ask whether, under the scheme, one is confined to investing in quoted shares. If so, is there any reason why the scheme should not be extended to unquoted shares? Is there any reason why all equity investment should not be eligible? I shall be grateful for an answer to that question. It may not be unreasonable to allow people to invest in unquoted investment, more risky though that may be.

At the end of the day, the changes encourage more people to put more of their money into equity investment. The Government have been successful in increasing share ownership. Literally millions of people are now investors, and with these changes, encouraging people to put their privatisation shares into the schemes, we shall see PEPs take off over the next 12 or 24 months.

11.30 pm

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has obviously spotted the fact that my reselection comes later this year and has decided to do me the greatest possible damage by being nice about me. However, I am grateful for her comments, if not for the general content of what she had to say about PEPs.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said that there was plenty of encouragement for savings at the moment through the movement in interest rates. That is broadly true, but it is worth noting in passing that the rates generally available for savers through financial institutions such as building societies have gone up proportionately less than the rates that are charged to borrowers as a result of the increase in the base rate. There are important questions to be asked about where the difference between those two movements in rates has gone, but that is for another debate.

Two points that arose in this debate are worth highlighting. First, there appears to be a clash of opinion between the two sides of the Chamber about the overall profile of investors in PEPs. Opposition Members have the evidence from financial journalists, from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and from the general feeling among the financial institutions in the PEP market, the overwhelming impression from which is that relatively few first-time investors are now taking advantage of PEPs, that on the whole PEPs are taken out by richer investors and that much PEP investment is the repackaging of existing portfolios.

From Conversative Members we have the impressions of one branch of the Bradford and Bingley building society; or perhaps one region of it. I would tend to believe the Institute of Fiscal Studies and other financial institutions before I believe the impression that the Financial Secretary was trying to give.

The other point that is worth re-emphasising is a simple point of principle. For all the talk of popular capitalism, ownership and so on that we have had from Conservative Members tonight, the fact remains that the inclusion of privatised issues within PEPs in effect gives a tax relief which is ultimately expenditure by the Exchequer, because it is income forgone. It is giving Exchequer subsidies to those who purchase public assets.

Bitterly opposed as Labour Members are to the sale of those public assets, we cannot possibly accept that it is right, on top of the disposal of those public assets, to assist their disposal by means of a tax subsidy—expenditure from the Exchequer, which is paid for by the generality of taxpayers.

11.36 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) raised two points. The first was about what he called the 50 per cent. rule. There is not actually a 50 per cent. rule. Somebody investing in unit trusts or investment trusts can invest all his portfolio in unit or investment trusts.

I think that my right hon. Friend was referring to the fact that the £2,400 is half the limit. Regulation 6(3) is concerned only with somebody who has first invested in shares and then wants to switch to unit trusts. There is also the point, which my right hon. Friend may have been making, that £2,400 is half the limit that may be invested in shares directly.

As I explained at the beginning of the debate, our original concept was designed to encourage direct ownership in individual shares, although we also allowed some investment in unit and investment trusts. We have increased that considerably, to a level that is more economic from the point of view of plan managers, but we still want to maintain the idea of direct investment in individual shares with the investor actually following the company. So we are trying to do both—to have a generous amount for unit and investment trusts and a higher amount for direct investment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling also referred to the 75 per cent. rule, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith).

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

The point was made—which, after many representations from the unit and investment trusts, has become a familiar one—that there are many British companies with assets throughout the world and that there is a degree of artificiality at the margin in saying that a company which is quoted and registered in London is necessarily a United Kingdom company, even if its activities are spread internationally.

Most hon. Members will agree that it would be odd if we gave a tax relief for people to invest largely overseas. It is difficult to distinguish one company from another and try to look at the underlying assets, whereas with a collective investment vehicle one can do that easily. But it would be odd to give tax relief for, say, M & G Japan.

Sir John Stanley: Will my right hon. Friend explain how it is meant to work in a situation where an individual plan holder invests in an investment trust that is just more than 75 per cent. invested in the United Kingdom? The board of directors of the investment trust is bound by the Companies Act to do its best by its shareholders. Let us assume that it is an international investment trust and it decides that it should switch a proportion of its investments out of the United Kingdom into companies overseas, and it falls below the 75 per cent. level. The plan holders will no longer be in a qualifying investment trust. What will happen to such plan holders?

Mr. Lamont: For an investment trust to qualify to be part of a PEP, it must satisfy the 75 per cent. requirement, and it will be able to be in a plan only if that is one of its investment objectives. The directors of the company will know that when they decide whether they wish to put their investment trust into a PEP.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield asked whether PEPs are confined to quoted shares. They are, but my hon. Friend may have noticed that we extended that provision to include the USM as well. We regard the BES as being more suited to encouraging investment in unquoted shares.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made another engaging speech. He has become the spokesman and interpreter of the new Right on the Opposition Benches. After the Budget, the right hon. Gentleman gave the House a lecture on monetarism, saying that if we were true believers in monetarism we would not have been worried about the surplus but would have cut taxes and let monetary policy take the strain. The right hon. Gentleman has also been lecturing on fiscal neutrality, and has been reading publications by Milton Friedman and the Adam Smith Institute well into the night.

The right hon. Gentleman has become very learned on Right-wing theory. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) pointed out, despite all the right hon. Gentleman's education from the Right and the new Right, he does not understand how PEP tax relief works. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South made it clear that one does not benefit from tax relief just by the act of investing. She emphasised, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield, that the advantage of PEP tax relief comes only to the person who invests consistently and holds shares for a period of time.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli stated that the regulations, the changes and the whole concept of PEPs simply complicate the tax system. Perhaps stemming from his misunderstanding of the relief, the right hon. Gentleman overlooks the fact that, because there is total exemption on dividends, one of the beauties of the system, and one of its greatest attractions, is that the investor does not need to have any contact with the Inland Revenue. That is a major advantage, and very different from the scheme proposed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who yet again suggested tax subsidy for investment; front-end relief on the Loi Monory model.

That would help the richer investor and be open to abuse on a considerable scale, because it would be possible for a person to recycle his investments each year, thus qualifying for relief. They would be able to put existing investments through a plan and qualify for relief just on the basis of their existing investments. That would be much more expensive than the existing form of relief, which is well targeted.

My hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, South and for Beaconsfield made the point that the strength of the scheme is that it rewards the long-term investor who sticks with his or her portfolio, and not—as Opposition Members seem to think—short-term speculators. The plan encourages investment in equity markets and encourages people to stay in them for the long term. That is its purpose, and our Budget changes strengthen the scheme and will prove to be very popular.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 88, Noes 165.

Division No 195] **[11.43pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Illsley, Eric
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Ingram, Adam
Battle, John	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Beckett, Margaret	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Boateng, Paul	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Bradley, Keith	Lamond, James
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Lewis, Terry
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Buckley, George J.	Loyden, Eddie
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	McAllion, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	McAvoy, Thomas
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	McFall, John
Clay, Bob	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Clelland, David	McNamara, Kevin
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Marek, Dr John
Cousins, Jim	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Cryer, Bob	Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Meale, Alan
Darling, Alistair	Michael, Alun
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Dixon, Don	Morgan, Rhodri
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Mullin, Chris
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Fisher, Mark	Pike, Peter L.
Foster, Derek	Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Foulkes, George	Quin, Ms Joyce
Fyfe, Maria	Redmond, Martin
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Robertson, George
Golding, Mrs Llin	Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Gordon, Mildred	Rowlands, Ted
Graham, Thomas	Ruddock, Joan
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Skinner, Dennis
Henderson, Doug	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Hinchliffe, David	Smith, John P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Home Robertson, John	Soley, Clive
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Spearing, Nigel

Steinberg, Gerry
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Metropolitan Trust Estate, Hemel Hempstead

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

11.54 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I welcome the opportunity to introduce this short debate on the supervision of housing associations and the importance of ensuring that bodies entrusted with public money are well run and considerate to their tenants.

Housing associations are like local authorities; some are good—I have been involved with some in my constituency, the performance of which is excellent—and some are bad. The debate is about the performance of one housing association—the Metropolitan housing trust, which is known to me because of its ownership of a small estate in my constituency, Woodhall farm, Hemel Hempstead. The history of the estate is substandard building, negligent maintenance, botched workmanship and complete contempt by the trust for the views and conditions of my constituents who have the misfortune to be its tenants.

I have been dealing with tenants' problems since I was elected in June 1983, often with a bewildering succession of officials and at least two chairmen. Correspondence has been protracted and fills half a drawer of my filing system. I have had numerous meetings with representatives of the trust, individual tenants and their leaders and the local authority. On one occasion, I chaired a public meeting of the tenants, at which trust representatives were present. I am sorry to say that all this effort appears to have made little difference to the trust's attitude. My last resort, therefore, is to place the facts in the public domain and rely on the reputation of my hon. Friend the Minister for concern about the problems of public sector tenants, when their landlords are indifferent to their plight.

The estate at Woodhall farm was built by Fairview Estates in the late 1970s as a speculative development. The majority of the housing there is owner-occupied, but certain areas were acquired by outside public bodies. Those formerly owned by the Greater London council are now in the hands of Dacorum borough council, although many have now been bought under the right to buy. This debate is about the smallest group—those acquired by the Metropolitan housing trust, a charitable housing association set up and funded by the Labour-controlled London borough of Haringey.

The Metropolitan housing trust owns 117 three and four-bedroom houses, which are occupied primarily by families originating from north London. In fairness to it, it must be said that there is substantial circumstantial evidence that the housing was substandard at purchase. Tacit recognition of this is evident from Fairview Estates' agreement to carry out certain remedial works and the company's financial compensation paid to another housing association on the estate, the Circle 33 housing trust, despite the passage of 10 years since construction. It must, nevertheless, be obvious that the trust did not take the prudent steps necessary to know what problems might lie ahead. The elementary piece of advice, caveat emptor, seems not to have been followed.

Residents have watched the steady decline of the condition of their homes in contrast to the generally well-maintained and managed local authority and owner-occupied parts of the estate. Although all the properties were built to the same specification, there is a clear difference between their condition now. The initial poor workmanship has therefore been exacerbated by the Metropolian housing trust's failure to carry out effective repairs over the past 10 years.

Most obvious of the defects in maintenance is the condition of the paintwork, which is a disgrace. A casual visitor to the estate would be struck forcibly by the peeling paintwork and rotten woodwork. No effective painting cycle has ever been in effect. As a result, comparatively trivial maintenance problems have deteriorated through inattention. I will give one example of what I mean. My constituent, Mrs. A, had occasion to report three years ago that part of her door frame was rotten. Without attention in the meantime, it has now become necessary to replace the entire porch.

There are many other such problems, and during the past few years I have taken officials and members of the trust on inspection tours. All of them have been shocked by what they have seen. I should not want my hon. Friend the Minister to think that this was a problem that only a lick of paint could cure. My constituent Mr. L has had to put up with his garden wall collapsing on to a parked van. Even after part of the wall was demolished and rebuilt at the instigation of the trust, Dacorum borough council's chief planning officer had to write in March 1988 in these terms:

"The defects referred to have not been rectified by the works and are likely to constitute a danger to the public in the near future under the provisions of the Building Act 1984".

Yet another botched job! Simple repairs have taken three to five years. Kitchen cupboards have crashed to the floor having been fixed to the wall by four floorboard nails instead of screws. Typical of the trust's approach, even now, is the repainting of a rotten frame by one workman, followed a few weeks later by a carpenter who has cut out the rotten wood, leaving the new wood unpainted. No doubt that will be rotten by the time it is painted again.

My constituents are reasonable people driven to the point of despair. One of them, Mr. Fred Rantle, has led an excellent campaign to get the Metropolitan housing trust to face up to its responsibilities and to provide an acceptable repair service. He is now chairman of the residents' group and has been helping other tenants with advice. I would like especially to thank him for his work and encouragement.

The trust itself recognises the repair backlog. It commissioned a professional survey between April and June 1986, which concluded that £500,000 needed to be spent. That amount must be higher now because of the passage of time. As a result of this survey by the trust, the officers of the trust reported to its members in October 1986:

"Members have been aware for a considerable length of time of significant defects to the dwellings at the above estate. These defects, due to their severity, have never been able to be handled in a comprehensive manner."

We then come down to the basic problem of money. The trust itself is in deficit by a reputed £500,000. No doubt that is due to mismanagement, as always. It has, therefore, three basic options. First, it approached the London borough of Haringey, which predictably shirked its responsibilities. I feel, as do my constituents, that this attitude owes much to the fact that they have no votes in Haringey and can therefore safely be treated with

contempt. That failure by Haringey was confirmed by the trust's director in a letter to me dated 21 June 1988, in which he said:

"First of all it has become clear that the London Borough of Haringey have no intention or capability of providing major repairs funding for the estate at the moment."

The second option to be examined was to ask the Housing Corporation for more money. That is quite unacceptable as the taxpayer has already paid for the houses and is entitled to expect them to be properly maintained. I believe that the trust has had a dusty answer from the Housing Corporation. The third option—the only practicable one—is for the trust to raise the money from sales of its property, which is what it is now doing. That brings me to a parallel, but related, bone of contention between the tenants and the trust.

Since moving to Hemel Hempstead, many of the tenants have prospered. They see around them council tenants who have become owner-occupiers and, quite naturally and justifiably, they themselves have aspirations to see their hard work rewarded by similar status. On behalf of a number of families, I have repeatedly pressed the trust to allow tenants to purchase. Predictably, the trust's members, who I believe are all owner-occupiers themselves, have denied that opportunity to their fellow citizens.

Given the financial circumstances, however, needs have triumphed over ideology and the need to raise £500,000 has moved minds. But that is the only silver lining in a very clouded sky and even that silver lining is tarnished. First, the discounts being allowed are mean in the extreme and are far inferior to those operating under the right to buy. It is grossly unfair to see similarly placed tenants in identical houses, funded entirely by public money, being faced with wholly different prices for a home of their own, depending on whether they are a council or housing association tenant. Much of that unfairness was discussed at length together with the repair problem, at a meeting for all tenants which I chaired in November 1987. It was attended by nearly every tenant and voted unanimously to request the same terms as those operating under the right to buy. Needless to say, the tenants' views were wholly ignored by the trust.

The trust went ahead with its own terms and circulated tenants in December 1987. The reaction was clear. Of the 30 families expressing an interest in purchase, only a handful could accept the terms. Some of these have now completed, but several other injustices have surfaced. One family which was originally unable to buy has since benefited from improved financial circumstances. With my support, it approached the trust to be reconsidered. The door was slammed in its face.

There is a sting in the tail, which will really shock my hon. Friend, if he has not already been disgusted enough by the trust's behaviour. The Metropolitan housing trust, a bastion of Stalinism to the end, has included a strict covenant in the contract imposing conditions on the new owners right down to the paint that they can use—a supreme irony in view of the trust's paint-free history. The conveyance also stipulates that purchasers should submit to the Metropolitan housing trust, with a fee, any request for alterations and extensions, despite the fact that these matters are properly dealt with under planning law. The ex-Metropolitan tenant will thus be left a semi-serf in his own home.

I am afraid that I have one more major complaint. Recently, tenants denied the opportunity to buy have been angered to see vacant houses on the estate sold on the open market. Perfect strangers can buy the association's houses, whereas long-standing tenants cannot. I am also told that the restrictive covenants do not apply to those sales, although I have been unable to confirm that point.

The evidence is damning in the extreme. In my view, the Housing Corporation should hold a full inquiry into the management of the Metropolitan housing trust and its finances. It should visit the estate and meet the tenants, who can add volumes of damning evidence. I have a petition signed by virtually every tenant, except those who were not in on three separate visits. The petition calls for a public inquiry—a call that I support. I would add a request that my hon. Friend looks closely at the principle of whether a housing body funded by a local authority should be allowed to own property beyond its own boundaries.

In its own conditions of tenancy the trust undertakes to obey these two conditions, among others:

"C.1.a) The Trust shall be responsible for all repairs and redecorations to the exterior of the premises

b) The Trust shall be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the structure of the premises."

In view of its abject failure to fulfil those conditions, I believe that the Housing Corporation should order the trust to be wound up and its assets transferred to another body that is more competent and considerate of its tenants.

Finally, I place on record my appreciation to the two Conservative councillors for this ward, Mike Griffiths and Denis Samuels, who have consistently supported the tenants' case, and, above all, to the tenants themselves, who have been prepared to fight for their rights.

In another debate on another subject, I might have used the phrase "battering one's head against a brick wall." In the context of the trust's shoddy masonry, I shall simply invite the Minister to give its tottering establishment one last shove.

12.8 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on securing the debate. My hon. Friend has in his constituency many properties run by housing associations in a very proper manner and I am grateful to him for his kind remarks about those associations.

Naturally, I am sorry to hear that my hon. Friend thinks that the attitude of one association towards its tenants lacks the care that is traditional. I am sure that we all suffer from day-to-day worries about repairs to our homes but perhaps in this case there are more serious problems attributable to the original construction which are a worry to Metropolitan's management as well as to its tenants.

Having promoted housing associations, the Government want to be confident that they will continue in their tradition of being responsible landlords. Through its normal monitoring and reporting system, the Housing Corporation is prepared to get to grips with a registered association that is demonstrably remiss. It is aware of the problems at the Woodhall estate, and in view of the

[Mr. David Trippier]

concern that my hon. Friend has clearly expressed this evening, I shall ensure that the Housing Corporation makes proper inquiries.

My hon. Friend raised a specific point about ownership. We have always been cautious about interfering with the acquisition and disposal of housing association stock. The right to buy is deservedly popular with council tenants who wish to progress to home ownership.

I can understand why the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations is close to my hon. Friend's heart. At this stage, he would not expect me to pass judgment on why one association has acted in a particular way on a particular estate. For all I know, its committee may be pressed by circumstances to take a line that is unpopular with several tenants to safeguard the interests of most. Again, in view of my hon. Friend's concern, I will see how the Housing Corporation views the matter.

Although the management of housing association grant has now been delegated almost entirely to the Housing Corporation, my Department was previously extensively involved in the details of new build and conversion schemes that attracted grant. Doubtless there were occasions when, for example, grant was withheld on work done when additional expenditure was incurred without proper consultation with the guardians of the public purse. Housing associations involved in building work with our financial help need to understand that they must respect the same discipline over expenditure using public money as they will have to when spending the private funding that is increasingly flowing to them. Similarly, they cannot automatically assume that they can continue to make substantial calls on the public purse if they run into problems. They may need to take tough decisions on how to finance solutions from their own resources.

I will take seriously the information that my hon. Friend gave the House. My hon. Friend is a staunch supporter of the housing association movement and of the Government's policies as enshrined in the Housing Act 1988. For those reasons particularly, I am taking seriously what he said. The Government's provision of public money for housing associations and our responsibility for the nation's housing policy mean that we need to make sure that there is appropriate oversight of the process, and not just setting up and running housing associations. All too often, the anti-social activities of a minority are unreasonably used to condemn all private sector landlords, and I include housing associations.

We need to check that associations are not only properly motivated but will have all the financial, managerial, technical and social skills to manage and service property and investment and to serve their clients' needs. I repeat my assurance to my hon. Friend: when the Housing Corporation has carefully examined the points that he has raised, I will be in touch with him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 11 May 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Official Secrets Act 1989.
2. Avon Light Rail Transit Act 1989.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read a Third time on Thursday 18 May.

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORIA BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 May.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Monday 15 May at 7 o'clock.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 May.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL
Ordered,
That the Committee on the Birmingham City Council (No. 2) Bill have leave to visit the route of the proposed motor race in Birmingham, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SCRABSTER HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

1. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of working days taken by the London passport office to process an application for the issue or renewal of a passport; and what it was one year ago.

6. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of working days in each of the London, Peterborough and Liverpool passport offices to process a renewal of passport; and what it was a year ago.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We give priority to urgent cases, where they are identified. The present time for processing postal applications at the London passport office is 20 working days compared with 51 last year; at Liverpool 59 compared with 15; and at Peterborough 33 compared with 30 a year ago. Most applications are processed well within those periods. The Liverpool backlog is a serious problem and, to help to reduce it, I propose, for a period of three months, to extend by two years the life of passports which have expired within the past five years and which are submitted to the Liverpool passport office for replacement. There will be no charge for this service.

Mr. Hanley: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the London figures, and recognise the greatly increased demand for passports, both for business and for pleasure, which is a symptom of a healthy economy. What contribution has the common format passport made to reducing the time scale for passport renewal applications in London? As a matter of urgency, through the common passport, will he increase computerisation throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: On the whole, after many years of discussion, the common passport has been well received. Passport offices are now in the throes of computerisation. It has begun well in Glasgow. One reason that the London performance is so much better than it was a year ago is that many postal applications to the London office are now diverted to Glasgow and dealt with there.

Mr. Jack: What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to speed up the issue of new passports in all passport offices? The news of renewals in Liverpool is welcomed by tourists and business people in the north-west of England. As we approach the holiday period, will my right hon. Friend give some assurances about our prospects for the early issue of new passports?

Mr. Hurd: We are just about at the peak of the passport-issuing season—the middle of May. The measure that I have just announced to help Liverpool with passport renewal applications will mean that staff will be available to deal with new passports. I hope that that will help to relieve an undoubtedly serious problem.

Mr. James Lamond: I congratulate the staff at all the passport offices mentioned by the Home Secretary on

reducing waiting times. Will the Secretary of State bear in mind the tremendous anxiety of some people who get in touch with their Members of Parliament because they do not know whether their passports will arrive in time for holidays for which they have paid? While the short-term improvement that is proposed by the Secretary of State is welcome, can we look forward to a long-term improvement which should bring about a turnround in applications of less than, say, 10 days?

Mr. Hurd: I very much hope so. Computerisation should be completed in all passport offices by the end of the year. If our experience so far is any guide, that will give a consistently better service to the public.

Dr. Glyn: While congratulating my right hon. Friend on the measures that he has taken to speed things up, I ask him how those people who have had to buy temporary passports at a cost of about £7·50, because their applications for passports have not been granted, can get their money refunded when they finally receive their proper passports.

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend knows of any specific cases which appear to him to be hard, perhaps he will draw them to my attention.

Mr. Madden: Will the Home Secretary warn all overseas nationals living in this country, who require re-entry visas, to ensure that they obtain them before they leave Britain? Will he especially look into the case of Mrs. Shahnaz Akhtar, my constituent, who went on holiday to Pakistan with her husband? She has been refused permission to return to her home and her husband because of bureaucratic red tape in Islamabad. Will he do everything to ensure that my constituent can return to this country, so that she can have the baby that she is expecting in safety in Bradford royal infirmary?

Mr. Hurd: I see that the questions refer to London, Peterborough and Liverpool but not, as far as I can tell, to Islamabad. The hon. Gentleman has made his point and, if he wishes to pursue it with me in greater detail, of course I will look at the matter carefully.

Mr. Darling: The Home Secretary said that it was expected to take four weeks to issue a passport in London. When one telephones the passport office, the announcement also says that it will take four weeks. However, when I eventually spoke to the people working in the office, they said that it would more likely take eight to 10 weeks. When I telephoned the Peterborough office, I was told that it would take seven weeks to three months. Does the Home Secretary accept that there are still substantial delays in processing passport applications? Does he accept that in Glasgow last year—where computerisation is well advanced—there were problems? Does he further accept that the real reason that there were delays and are likely to be delays this summer is because there is substantial under-staffing throughout all passport offices within the United Kingdom? Unless the Home Secretary deals with that problem, we will continue to face inordinate delays in processing what is a comparatively simple application.

Mr. Hurd: If I may say so, that is a very old-fashioned question. The reason why, last year especially, there was a delay, and this year in some places the public is still not getting the service that it deserves, is that the demand for passports has built up very fast and the offices have not been computerised. However many staff we employ would be no substitute for the kind of computerisation which is now working in Glasgow and producing the improvements that I have described. The secret is to get computerisation into place by the end of this year.

Robbery

2. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking against robbery.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Violence on our streets is a matter of great concern to the Government, as it rightly is to the public. We are supporting the police in their efforts to curb this menace, and we are concentrating resources on certain urban high-crime areas through our safer cities programme. We have also produced a crime prevention handbook that contains advice on what citizens can do to reduce the risk of attack. Nearly 2½ million copies of that handbook have been distributed. I am pleased to say that the number of robberies recorded by the police nationally fell by 3·7 per cent. last year. The fall in Derbyshire was a notable 15 per cent.

Mr. McLoughlin: While welcoming any fall in the number of robberies, and being pleased with the fall in Derbyshire, which was greater than the national average, does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest ways in which the public can help the police is by taking greater care of their property? Far too often temptation is put in the way of people. Property could easily be put out of sight and thereby crimes could possibly be averted.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the remarkable fall of 15 per cent. in the number of robberies in Derbyshire last year. He is also right in saying that the average citizen should take every conceivable action to defend himself against unwarranted attack by ensuring that temptation in the way of property is not carried around too openly in the streets or left lying around in his home or motor car. It is simple self-defence and self-protection very often.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that, with sexual assaults, street attacks and street robberies are the crimes most feared by the public? Has he had an opportunity to look closely at the performance of the Battersea division of the Metropolitan police which has reduced street robberies by more than 60 per cent. in the past two years? Will he consider how far its special concerted tactics are applicable to other urban areas, especially in South Yorkshire?

Mr. Patten: I was rather hoping to get the opportunity to raise the remarkable success of the Battersea division of the Metropolitan police. Help comes from unusual quarters on occasions. The hon. Gentleman is right that in 1988 the division cut violent crime by a third through a concerted attack on it and through better targeting by the police over a four-month period. It also improved the clear-up rate by 12 per cent. As the hon. Gentleman said, other forces can learn lessons from the Metropolitan police about how targeting can not just displace but break up and disperse areas of notable high crime.

Mr. Roger King: Does my hon. Friend agree that a prime concern of many people is the level of armed

robberies? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the sentences imposed by the courts are adequate to deter the growing incidence of this disease in our communities, bearing in mind that most people want substantial sentences to combat that problem?

Mr. Patten: I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend has said. We already have the reforms which were introduced in the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 and perhaps more importantly the increased sentences provided for the courts of up to, for example, life imprisonment for carrying a firearm in the commission of a crime. The courts have a severe range of penalties for those who use, let alone carry and use, firearms in the commission of crime and we hope that they use them.

Mr. Sheerman: I am sorry to remind the Minister that robberies increased by 160 per cent. between 1979 and 1986 whatever he says about last year and our information is that that crime is increasing yet again this year. Does he not know that successful packages to act against robbery and crime of this kind are usually led by a local authority-police partnership? Will he explain why, with the announcement of the new safer cities programme, which includes Wandsworth and Islington, the committee that was set up in Islington totally bypasses the police consultative group and excludes from the 12-person committee any councillor, saying that only representatives and officers from Islington can serve on the committee?

Mr. Patten: We want to see the maximum possible co-operation to continue the successful downward trend in crimes against property and crimes of violence. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not think it notable that crimes of robbery—street crimes—fell last year by 3·7 per cent.

The safer cities programme is extremely important and we welcome the co-operation of local authorities of all political colours. I wish that more Labour-led local authorities would heed what Sir Peter Imbert said yesterday when he criticised so many Labour-controlled boroughs for getting in the way of the proper working of police-public consultative committees. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's right hon. and hon. Friends in the new convenient Socialist world that they are trying to create will try to talk to some of those Labour authorities and persuade them to co-operate with the police.

Responsibility for Children

3. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is considering to increase the responsibility of parents and teachers for the actions of children in their care.

12. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on extending parental responsibility for offences committed by children.

Mr. John Patten: I wish to encourage further use of the powers that the law already provides, firstly, to require parents to attend court with their children, secondly, to bind parents over and, thirdly, to require them to pay their children's fines. We are considering making it an offence for parents to fail to make reasonable efforts to prevent their children committing offences, as is quite comon in some other countries. Teachers play a crucial part in helping children grow up to respect and abide by the law, but we have no plans at present, to make them responsible in law for their pupil's actions during school time.

Mr. Butler: Given that my hon. Friend's proposals quite rightly bite only on parents who could reasonably be expected to control their children's behaviour, why does he not extend that principle to teachers who act in loco parentis?

Mr. Patten: I note my hon. Friend's strong concern about this. However, parents have a continuing duty to look after their children and bear responsibility for them. It is more difficult to imagine that children should look to their teachers, of whom there may be several during the course of the day, to be responsible for their acts, or that the teachers could be reasonably held to be responsible. I view with mounting alarm reports about schools in some parts of the country, for example the Ellesmere nursery and first school in Sheffield, where there seems to have been a complete breakdown in the school, with classes being closed before Easter. The children attending the school are aged between three and seven, not 13 and 17.

Mr. Hunter: While I warmly welcome the attention that my hon. Friend gives to the subject, will he give further assurances that he will move with great caution? It is quite possible for the children of responsible parents to act irresponsibly. Likewise, how can the courts determine the degree of parental responsibility or irresponsibility with regard to a particular offence?

Mr. Patten: Of course we are cautious. The courts can determine whether parents have, on a prior occasion or occasions, been warned of their failure to take care of and proper responsibility for their children. There is a little-used provision on the statute book that was introduced by the Labour party in the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, to give courts the power to bind over parents to ensure the behaviour of their children up to a recognisance of £500. I wish that the courts would use that provision more often.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not totally unethical for a Minister to name a school such as Ellesmere school which is near where I live? To do so serves to highlight and arouse a lot of interest in it, and blacken its name so that the problem becomes more difficult rather than easier to solve. The Minister should have had more sense than to name a school.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman should be more concerned about the school itself. The reports were published in the national press last week and are well known. The matter has not been raised by Ministers at this Dispatch Box. It is a matter of considerable public concern when, unfortunately, through bad behaviour, problems set in in a school, and make it ungovernable for a period, especially when the schoolchildren are aged between three and seven. There is something wrong and a combination of better parental responsibility and greater teacher responsibility would help, and that is exactly what the proposal is aimed at.

Prisons

4. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the prison building programme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Eight new prisons have been opened since 1985, seven are under construction and one, which has been converted from existing buildings at Banstead in Surrey, will open in a few weeks' time. Five more are planned to start on site this year and eight are in various stages of planning and development.

The building programme also covers the expansion of existing establishments. By the end of this year, nearly 2,000 new places will have been added to existing establishments in a period of less than two years. The prison department directorate of works has begun a five-year programme to provide over 6,500 cells with access to sanitation. By the mid-1990s we will have added about 25,000 places to the system.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, whose programme is a credit to his Department. Does he agree that the major problem in the prison system at the moment, in relation to overcrowding, comes from remand prisoners, not those serving time? As a consequence of that, in the new prison programme will he consider separating remand centres from prisons and building them in the centre of towns, close to the court centres so that access is provided to relatives and lawyers? That would reduce alienation and speed up the time in which cases are brought to court.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is entirely right to focus on remands. There are too many remand prisoners in the system. The Government are anxious to reduce the pressure caused by the numbers. We are making provision for remand places in the building programme that I have outlined.

My hon. Friend has referred to the urban remand centres, and we are giving particular attention to the possibility of such centres at Everthorpe and Cookham Wood. We also have a multifaceted strategy to reduce the number of prisoners held in remand—for example, the imposition of time limits on pre-trial proceedings, an increase in the number of bail hostel places, an increase in bail information schemes, electronic monitoring, more courts and more judges. It is a comprehensive programme.

Mr. Skinner: Will these prisons be built especially to keep prisoners in? When the Tory Government were elected in 1979, I think the slogan was, "Elect us and set the people free." In the 10 years since, the prisoners have been breaking out.

Mr. Hogg: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to Risley, it was built in the 1960s.

Mr. Latham: Can my hon. Friend assure me that the building work to extend Stocken prison will be carried out more efficiently and cost-effectively than the building of the prison itself, which he and I have had occasion to discuss several times?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has raised the question of Stocken prison on a number of occasions and his constituents have every reason to be grateful to him for the attention he has given to their needs. The answer to his question is yes.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

5. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I last met the commissioner on 26 April, when we discussed policing arrangements for this year's Notting Hill carnival.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. When he next meets the commissioner, will he congratulate him on the progress being made by the police in London in the fight against crime? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in certain parts of London such as Brixton, for example, there was a considerable fall in the total number of notifiable offences in 1988?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, there has been a fall in that area, which comes within the Lambeth district. There has been a fall in total recorded crime across London. Lambeth area, which has been particularly difficult in the past, also registered a 1·5 per cent. fall, year-on-year. That is welcome, although my hon. Friend will agree that there is a great deal more to be done.

This fall reflects the considerable efforts being made by the police and the community in the whole range of activities that come under the heading of crime prevention and neighbourhood watch.

Mr. Cohen: When the Home Secretary next meets the commissioner, will he ask him about the leaflets on racial harassment that the police were sending out via Saatchi and Saatchi but which got lost? Will he ensure that there is an investigation and that the criminals—presumably Saatchi and Saatchi—are brought to court?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly look into that. The progress that has been made in dealing with racial attacks by the Metropolitan police has been welcomed by the hon. Gentleman himself, and we hope to publish the latest report of the working group, with a check list of the initiatives being taken, during next week.

Mr. Trotter: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the police welcome the new powers that they will have from 1 July to refuse to grant shotgun licences and, for the first time, to require these weapons to be kept in safe custody? Will he undertake that the advice that the Home Office must give the police in the near future ensures that there shall be strict regulation over the safe keeping of these deadly weapons? Does he accept that the police and public are right in their belief, in the light of the incident in Monkseaton, that there should be a requirement that those keeping shotguns shall be responsible for ensuring that they do not fall into the wrong hands, and that, whatever the inconveniences involved, they shall be required to keep them safely in custody?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has a natural interest in this because of the tragedy at Monkseaton in his constituency. He is perfectly right: from 1 July as a result of the decisions that Parliament has taken, a statutory safekeeping condition will be imposed on shotgun certificate holders.

Guidance to the police will recommend that all shotguns kept on domestic premises be stored in a locked gun cabinet or similarly secured container.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Home Secretary endorse the remarks made yesterday by Sir Peter Imbert about the importance of partnership in policing in the Metropolis? In particular, can he say whether he has discussed the importance of introducing more members of ethnic minorities into the police force?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed I have. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I have discussed it with the commissioner often. Although he and I would like to see a speedier improvement, the hon. Gentleman will have noticed not just in the Metropolitan police but countrywide a steady build-up in the total of police officers recruited from ethnic minorities. I do not have the exact figure but I believe that it is in the neighbourhood of 1,200, which is a considerable increase on two or three years ago.

Mr. Kilfedder: What action does the commissioner intend to take to rid central London of the illegal street traders and their lookouts, who defraud Londoners and the vast number of tourists who come to the capital by the sale of fake goods, and also the hot food stalls which sell food that may be contaminated?

Mr. Hurd: The responsibility is divided between the police and environmental health officers. If the hon. Gentleman has particular instances in mind, I hope that he will let the police or me know, because the difficulty of enforcement is often one of evidence.

Mr. Corbett: Did the Home Secretary and the commissioner discuss who might become the new director of public affairs in the Metropolitan police? Will it be one of the placemen suggested by the deputy Prime Minister, Bernard Ingham, or someone of more professional independence?

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Ingham has a wide range of responsibilities, but they do not include the one suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Slimming Clinics (Drugs)

7. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many commercially operated slimming clinics currently have authority to supply amphetamines and similar controlled drugs to patients; and what steps he is taking to restrict such supply.

11. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many commercially operated slimming clinics currently have authority to supply amphetamines and similar controlled drugs to patients; and what steps he is taking to further restrict such supply.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Forty one clinics currently have such an authority. The drugs concerned—diethylpropion, phentermine and mazindol—are controlled under schedule 3 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985 by reason of their dependence-forming properties and liability to misuse. The clinics have been informed that against a background of recent authoritative medical opinion, which assigns a severely restricted role to these drugs in the treatment of obesity, existing authorities will not be renewed on their expiry. Some 20 applications by new clinics have been refused.

Miss Nicholson: I welcome my hon. Friend's splendid statement. Does he agree that not just amphetamines but other drugs have no role to play in slimming and that it is merely a question of eating less? The current fad is the melt-down diet where, alas, the only thing that melts down as one watches one's friends eating buttered toast in the Members' Smoking Room is one's will power. None the less, my sex being ultra-sensitive about their shape and size, they are extra gullible about slimming. My hon. Friend should make every effort to continue to control slimming drugs and slimming advertisements because they are all totally useless.

Mr. Hogg: I think that it would be offensive of me to say that I shall consult my hon. Friend about the wisdom of what she has said. I can say from personal experience that less whisky and less butter does one a lot of good.

Mr. Knight: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance to the House that he will continue to monitor the supply of appetite-suppressant drugs and that, if he feels that further measures are necessary, he will not hesitate to take them? Does he agree that the simple message that should be sent to the general public is that it is better to have a hearty appetite and be somewhat overweight than to be on drugs?

Mr. Hogg: It is very bad to be on drugs unless they are absolutely clinically necessary. In the case of the three drugs that I mentioned earlier, they are habit-forming and should be used only in cases of extreme obesity. It was unsatisfactory that a number of the clinics by which they were prescribed should have had a direct interest in their prescription.

Drugs Trafficking

8. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amounts of money have been forfeited under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act since it came into operation.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that the courts have made confiscation orders for more than £8 million since the Drug Trafficking Offences Act came into force in January 1987.

Mr. Rathbone: While my right hon. Friend should be congratulated on that and on the extensions of the Act in his bilateral agreements with other Governments, may I urge him to maximise the procedures by extending those activities nationally and internationally? In addition, may I put to him the need to apply the funds so seized to the research and special projects that are required to battle against drug misuse and drug trafficking, as was so ably pointed out in an Adjournment debate only last week by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery)?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that the meeting of Ministers dealing with drugs in London next week will enable me to apply some more powerful persuasion to some of our allies and partners to pass their own legislation for confiscating assets and to reach agreement with us on that. We must try to put the resources where they are needed—for example, in adding again to the number of officers in regional crime

squads. That cannot be done simply on the basis of windfall profits. The police argue—with some force—that under the present system they find it difficult to meet the cost of, for example, the foreign travel needed for some overseas investigations, or to finance the rewards that they seek to pay, and the we are looking at the ideas that they have put forward.

Mr. George Howarth: Does the Home Secretary agree that it is important not only that this money be recycled to assist the police but that it is used to help voluntary agencies that provide advice and support to drug addicts?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I am therefore glad that spending on drug misuse services in England will have risen by £5 million from £9 million last year to £14 million this year.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If the American Government can operate a system whereby the ill-gotten gains of drug smugglers are put to the good use of fighting the battle against drugs, why cannot we do that in Britain?

Mr. Hurd: That question might properly be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The answer is that we try to put the resources where they are needed and that cannot be done on the basis of the profit that happens to accrue from the legislation. For example, we have added 229 police officers to the drugs wings of regional crime squads on the basis of where we think that they are needed, and we are adding another 20 this year. It would be difficult to do that if we were operating on the windfall basis.

Mr. Randall: What new or special measures are the Government taking to control the introduction into the United Kingdom of the drug crack, which is highly addictive and is spreading exceedingly rapidly in the United States? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reported 14 per cent. increase last year in the number of registered addicts is at least one measure of the failure of the Government's policy to combat drug abuse?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman cannot deal with the matter in that vein. Of course, he is perfectly right in that the warnings that we receive from the United States and, in particular the anxieties expressed to me in Italy and Spain in the past few months, are among the reasons why I put cocaine, with crack as its derivative, at the top of the agenda of the meeting of Ministers that I have called next week in London. We must take more action in the growing countries in Latin America, and the hon. Gentleman will know of the United Kingdom's initiative on that. We have to insist on the continuance of frontier checks at our seaports and airports after 1992 and, as the hon. Gentleman said, we have to be active within our own towns and cities. We need defence in depth in all three of those areas.

Mr. John Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that three times as much cocaine was seized in the first three months of this year as in the whole of 1988? That demonstrates the seriousness of the drug abuse problem, but does it not also show that the enforcement agencies are being successful in tackling this serious crime?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. There have been some notable operations, and some operations are going on now. My hon. Friend is right on both counts. It shows the continuing seriousness of the situation and the House might like to study the evidence given by my Department to the Select Committee on Home Affairs yesterday, which I shall be developing at the conference next week.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

9. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to lay the first order relating to tape recording of police interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I mentioned in my reply to the hon. Member's question of 2 March, we have consulted the Association of Chief Police Officers about the forces to be included in the first order to be laid under section 60(1)*(b)* of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. We expect to hear from the association towards the end of this month. We will then bring forward an order as soon as possible.

Forces do not require an order before they can start tape recording. At least five forces are now tape recording interviews throughout their areas and all forces expect to be using tape recording forcewide by 1991.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that reply. It seems to be taking a long time to get this practice into place. Has the Minister any evidence of problems arising from summaries being made of tape-recorded interviews? Is it not slightly defeating the purpose if juries are given summaries of tape recordings rather than having an opportunity of hearing those parts of tape recordings which might be disputed?

Mr. Hogg: It is true that when the process started the summaries tended to be a bit too prolix. I am glad to say that that problem has been tackled and that it is no longer happening in the majority of cases. When juries need to listen to the tapes they can do so. There is no doubt that this is a great improvement both in terms of law enforcement and of civil liberties.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that, to my knowledge, it is 15 years since this matter was first pressed on a Government, so [illegible] any action now being taken is most welcome? Is he further aware that during those years there has been a technological revolution and that it is now possible to video record interviews much more cheaply? What thought is being given to introducing video-recorded interviews in police stations, which would be more effective than the audio type?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. and learned Friend is right to emphasise the importance of this procedure. We hope that by the end of 1991 all forces will be tape recording forcewide. We have no plans to introduce the video recording of interviews at this stage, though the House will know that a certain amount of work is being done on the possibility of video recording the evidence of young persons in sex offence cases.

Ticket Touting

10. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce legislation on ticket touting.

Mr. John Patten: We have no proposals for such legislation.

Mr. Campbell: Is the Minister aware that the powers of the police, which are limited to arresting touts for obstruction, are wholly inadequate to cope with the problem of touting, which is a scar on the face of west end theatre and of major sporting events such as Wimbledon and the Cup Final? Will he ask Lord Justice Taylor to consider whether ticket touting has any implications for crowd safety at football matches by encouraging persons without tickets to go to matches in the hope of obtaining tickets from touts?

Mr. Patten: I am sure that Lord Justice Taylor will take into account the point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman, who is a distinguished lawyer and has strongly held views on this issue. I think that most hon. Members would regard ticket touting as pretty obnoxious—*[Interruption.]* I carefully said "most hon. Members" with my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) in view. Nobody is compelled to take part in the process.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend agree that ticket touting is a form of brokerage between a willing seller and a willing buyer—*[Interruption.]*—that it is no more reprehensible when it takes place on a pavement than when it takes place in one of our City exchanges, that brokers are risk-takers and that everyone is jealous of them when they make a profit but nobody has sympathy for them when they make a loss?

Mr. Patten: I do not want to get into ideological trouble with my hon. Friend, but I agree with her that nobody is compelled to take part in the process, that the person who raises the price of a ticket to sell it on the street does not defraud the person who originally set the ticket price and that the person who pays the price is not unaware of the difference. I believe that it is pretty obnoxious and that it is extraordinary the prices people are prepared to pay, but it is a lawful activity.

Domestic Violence

13. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to deal with domestic violence.

Mr. Hurd: I welcome the action taken by the Metropolitan police and other forces in response to increased public concern about domestic violence. There are now 15 specialist police units in London that investigate alleged offences and offer practical help to victims. We are also looking at policy and practice in the light of the findings of recently published Home Office research, and are asking other Departments to do the same.

Mr. Sheerman: Following the report of the Home Department that half a million wives are beaten violently by their husbands each year, will the Department now launch a national campaign to highlight that problem? Will the right hon. Gentleman instruct police officers to take appropriate and firm action in every case of domestic violence?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman will know that the attitude of the police to that problem has changed substantially. In the old days, the police were reluctant to become involved when they heard a shindig or a fracas. Today, they are encouraged and trained to become involved. If they cannot deal with the situation themselves, they bring in other agencies. As that is already happening in London and elsewhere, there is no need to launch a campaign.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a banquet given by President Babangida.

Mr. Archer: As the right hon. Lady has drawn a distinction between using public money for propaganda, which is done by those who disagree with her, and using it to inform the public, which is what her Government do, will she seize the opportunity to indicate whether, for that purpose, informing the public includes misinforming them? Will she consider into which category she would place the approach to sixth-form teachers to distribute to their classes recruiting propaganda from Conservative Central Office?

The Prime Minister: I believe that we have adhered absolutely to the Widdicombe rules—[HON. MEMBERS: "We?"] Government Departments have adhered absolutely to the Widdicombe rules, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows have been published, and copies of which are in the Library. As to the case that was heard yesterday, we shall uphold whatever the courts ultimately decide. That is what the rule of law is.

With regard to the leaflet and information that went to schools, I see nothing wrong in sending information to school careers officers, so that they can say what jobs are available. I do not know what the right hon. and learned Gentleman's experience is at election time, but we find that we are inundated with requests for information. I expect that he is too.

Mr. Onslow: Would it not be a disaster for the Western Alliance if the Government of this country ever fell into the hands of a party whose policy on nuclear deterrence——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The subject of questions must fall within the responsibility of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Kinnock: Bearing in mind the Prime Minister's previous experience of the Department of the Environment, does the right hon. Lady think that the Government's poll tax information has been handled "well or accurately"?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated in my reply to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), whatever the courts ultimately decide will, of course, be upheld. That is the precise point at issue. As to information, Departments have adhered strictly to the Widdicombe rules and will continue to do so. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is proud of some of the Labour local

government leaflets that have been distributed. That issued by Lambeth and Norwood Labour party, dealing with registration, states:

"If canvassers come round to question you, say you are the baby-sitter or looking after the premises . . . Wait a week or two, then write back saying your dog ate the form, it fell in the washing up, or you never received a form."

That is Labour for you.

Mr. Kinnock: Is it not very obvious that we now have a Government who impose injunctions against others for telling the truth and break injunctions when they are caught telling lies?

The Prime Minister: That is nonsense and the right hon. Gentleman knows it. He knows that there was an ex-parte application, that that ex-parte application was granted and that the substantive hearing has still to take place. Is his idea of justice that he should decide before both sides of the story are heard?

Mr. Redwood: Will the Prime Minister agree that the experiment last year trying to keep the pound in line with the deutschemark led to a very dramatic credit boom and that it would still be impossible both to be members of the exchange rate mechanism and to run a successful monetary policy in the best interests of the country?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, our top priority is to keep monetary policies that will keep downward pressure on inflation, that we will not hesitate to take whatever action is necessary and that interest rates will remain as high as is necessary for that purpose for as long as is necessary.

Q2. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Is not the real reason for the Government's panic in issuing millions of misleading poll tax leaflets, including one this morning to my right hon. Friend the Opposition Chief Whip, the overwhelming hatred of people in this country for the poll tax? How will the Prime Minister tomorrow in Perth explain away the report from Lothian council that by the end of this month 500,000 out of 680,000 people will still not have paid a penny of the poll tax? Is not the poll tax, instead of being the flagship of her third term of Government, fast developing into her Titanic?

The Prime Minister: No, and the hon. Gentleman would not be half as worried about it if he genuinely thought that. He knows full well that the community charge is a way of paying for local government and of showing up the extravagance of Labour local authorities. Will he please look at some of the totally, utterly misleading and disgraceful leaflets about the community charge that have been put out at ratepayers' expense?

Q3. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Waller: What would the consequences be if trade unions were allowed by law once again to involve themselves in secondary action?

The Prime Minister: I think that we should get the same things as happened last time the Labour Government put the whole country under the authority of trade union bosses. They seem to be wanting a mask of respectability, but the people behind the mask are still the same. We should get massive strikes in hospitals and schools, rubbish not collected on the streets, the gravediggers not able to bury bodies, and all the other terrible things that we had in the winter of discontent. They would put the country under the trade union bosses once again.

Dr. Owen: Would it not be wiser for the Prime Minister to welcome the decision of the Labour party to accept the deployment of Polaris submarines and to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules apply to both sides of the House. Questions must be on matters for which the Prime Minister has responsibility.

Dr. Owen: Would it not be wiser for the Prime Minister to welcome the decision of the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not good enough. Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman.

Q4. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in his letter of resignation to the BMA one of my local GPs pointed out that it is totally unacceptable for a professional organisation to issue political leaflets to patients? He added that the error was further compounded by the inclusion in that leaflet of misleading statements, half-truths and lies. Will she agree with me that many elderly people were frightened by that pamphlet when, in fact, they will benefit substantially from the proposals?

The Prime Minister: I agree that many people were frightened by that leaflet, and that a number of doctors have been gravely concerned that the BMA has put out such a leaflet in their name. Nevertheless, we are very pleased that we have now reached agreement with the BMA in a contract for the doctors, which I hope will be fully accepted. We shall then be able to go ahead in a much better spirit, and put in place the improvements proposed in the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Prime Minister agree that the difference in accuracy between the leaflet delivered in Wales and that delivered in England is proportional to the distance from Central Office? Is it not time that the Tory party and not the people of Britain paid for Conservative party policy?

The Prime Minister: The rules to which we adhere are those set out in the Widdicombe report. Those rules are in the Library and, if anything, they have been slightly tightened up.

Let me point out to the hon. Gentleman that a final decision is not usually arrived at when only one side has put its case to a judge. That is why a substantive hearing must take place before the judge in a few days. I note that the Labour party likes to have only one side of the story when it makes its judgments.

Q5. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this week's announcement of a 42 per cent. increase in the suckler cow premium for beef farmers is a major boost for British beef production? Does she also agree that it demonstrates both the achievement of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the negotiations in the European Agriculture Council and the Government's renewed commitment to supporting British farmers to ensure that they can compete on fair and equal terms in Europe? Is not the announcement good for the farmer, for the housewife and for exports?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister in May about the suckler cow premium has been welcomed by industry as a whole. As my hon. Friend has said, it encourages the production of high-quality beef, for which there is a continuing demand at home and an increasing demand in export markets. I also agree that the announcement was accompanied by a very good negotiation with the Common Market on agricultural policy, and that the revaluation of the green pound is also greatly to the benefit of our farmers.

Q6. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Prime Minister join me in rejoicing at the discovery on Bankside in Southwark, in my constituency, of the ruins of the Rose theatre, the great mediaeval theatre of England? Will she also join me in applauding the collaboration between the developers Imry, English Heritage and the Museum of London, which have allowed us to discover this great treasure? Given the risk that on Monday the site will be filled in and pile-driven and the stage destroyed, will she now add her support to discussions that are taking place between English Heritage and the developers so that we may preserve for ever the greatest of the Roses of England?

The Prime Minister: I agree that the discovery of the remains of the Elizabethan Rose theatre is a historic event, and that everything possible must be done to preserve those remains so that one day they may be on public display. I understand that there have been very constructive discussions—as the hon. Gentleman has said—between the developers, English Heritage and the Museum of London, and that as a result the remains are to be preserved with minimal damage. I welcome that; and it does not rule out the possibility of a scheme for public display one day. In the meantime, constructive discussions continue.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Tebbit.

Mr. Tebbit *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a great deal of time.

Mr. Tebbit: What would be the effect on Western security if Her Majesty's Government policy changed to one in which the taxpayer was called upon to pay the cost of a nuclear deterrent, but the Prime Minister of the day gave an undertaking that he would never use it?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes his point very effectively. In that case the deterrent is not a deterrent because it does not deter and the policy is the old one of unilateralism in a different package.

Q7. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Darling: Can the Prime Minister explain why the dreaded words "poll tax" appear on an official Government publication on the community charge? Surely there must be some mistake?

The Prime Minister: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman thinks that, and calls it a community charge.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 MAY—Private Members' motions.

Motion to take note of EC documents on taxation of savings. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 16 MAY—Opposition day (10th allotted day). Until about Seven o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Soaring Cost of the Government's Publicity Machine". Afterwards there will be a debate entitled "The Decline of Manufacturing Industry". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motion to take note of EC documents on procurement procedures in the water, energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Employment Bill.

Motion to take note of EC documents on control of concentrations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 18 MAY—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the White Paper on Developments in the European Community July-December 1988 (Cm. 641).

FRIDAY 19 MAY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 22 MAY—Motion for the spring Adjournment.

Remaining stages of the Atomic Energy Bill *[Lords]*, the National Maritime Museum Bill *[Lords]* and the Civil Aviation (Air Navigation Charges) Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Speaker, the House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the spring Adjournment on Friday 26 May until Tuesday 6 June.

[Monday 15 May
Relevant European Community Document
4763/89 Withholding tax
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 15-xvi (1988-89), para 2

Tuesday 16 May
Relevant European Community Documents
8803/88, 8804/88, 8805/88 Procurement procedures (Water, Energy, Transport and Telecommunications)
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
HC 15-ii (1988-89), para 1 and HC 15-xxi (1988-89), para 2

Wednesday 17 May
Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 9822/88 Control of mergers
(b) 5936/88 Control of mergers
Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15-ix (1988-89), para 1
(b) HC 43-xxxvii (1987-88), para 1
HC 220-i]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment was seeking sanctuary yesterday rather than coming to the House, but will the Leader of the House arrange for him to come to the House later today or early next week to explain why the law of the land is still being flouted and why this poll tax leaflet was delivered through the letter box of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition only this morning as were tens of thousands of such leaflets elsewhere? When will the Government obey the ruling of the judge in this matter?

The Leader of the House said last week, when I asked him when we would have the long-promised debate on the Government's proposals to substitute student loans for student grants, that we would have a debate

"when the current discussions with the financial institutions have been concluded".—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1989; Vol. 152, c. 364.]

According to newpaper reports today, those discussions are being concluded by a breakdown of relations between the Government and the institutions that they were trying to con into backing the scheme. Can we have an urgent debate, because the students, the universities, and above all, the students' parents are desperately keen to know what the Government will propose?

Will the Leader of the House also tell us when we can expect the long-promised debate on community care? it is now more than a year since the Griffiths report was received by the Government and during that time, hundreds of people who find it difficult to cope outside institutions without proper care have been turned out on to the streets. How many more thousands will be turned out before the Government come up with their response to the Griffiths report?

Will the Leader of the House tell us when we shall have a debate on the lamentable state of our preparations for 1992?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman raised questions that I imagine could feature in the debate next Tuesday. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government is the Minister responsible for local government matters and it was wholly proper and appropriate for him to respond to the private notice question yesterday. As he informed the House, the case will be heard in court on Monday. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment acted as quickly as possible to comply with the terms of the order on Tuesday. It is right that the Government should explain a change that will affect 35 million people clearly, concisely and accurately. That is what we have been seeking to do by means of the leaflet.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about student loans. As I have said in previous weeks, the best time for a debate on top-up loans for students will be when the discussions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education with the financial institutions have reached a conclusion. We have not yet reached that stage, so I cannot undertake that there will be a very early debate, but I will keep the position under review. The discussions with the financial institutions are making good progress and there is absolutely no truth in the suggestion in today's press that they are close to breakdown.

The hon. Gentleman raised again the question of the Griffiths report and I recognise that there is much interest in the Griffiths report on community care. As I have made clear in recent weeks, the Government are actively engaged in work to formulate our own proposals, which we intend

to bring forward in the near future. We are very mindful of the concern that there should not be undue delay, but it is essential to reach the right solution and there are no easy answers in this complex area. The time for a debate will be when we have announced our proposals.

On the question of a debate about 1992 matters, subject to your decision, Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the Opposition could have raised some of those issues in the debate next Thursday.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will my right hon. Friend say whether it will be possible to have a debate in the near future on the tragic events taking place in the Socialist Republic of Romania? Is my right hon. Friend aware that many hundreds of thousands of people are having their lives and homes smashed to bits, that people are being persecuted for wishing to follow Christian or other religious beliefs and that civil rights, to the extent they exist in Romania, are being denied daily to those who wish to have at least a modicum of freedom?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's point. Our right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) raised the matter with me recently and he had many of the same considerations in mind. I am aware of the general interest in the matter and in a debate on foreign affairs. However, I am sure that my hon. Friend will appreciate that at this time in the season, the demands for time on the Floor of the House are particularly heavy. I will look for a suitable opportunity when I can see the time.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that, regardless of whether the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence are right about the nuclear test veterans or whether I am right, the fact is that those men, who have served their country loyally and with great dedication, now feel aggrieved and embittered? The only way to solve their grievance is by a judicial inquiry. May we debate that next week please?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment further on the substance of the matter except to repeat what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. I am afraid that I cannot find time for a debate next week, although the right hon. Gentleman presses me.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): My right hon. Friend has announced a debate on EEC happenings of more than six months ago. Is he aware that many of us are far more concerned about what is likely to happen over the next six months? Will he ensure that the terms of the debate are drawn so that we can raise the whole matter of the prospects for the Madrid summit, the Delors report and other matters that are of great concern to hon. Members, irrespective of their view of the Community?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise my hon. Friend that I shall do exactly that, although I shall consider his point. I realise that matters of European scrutiny are causing considerable dissatisfaction among a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House. I had a meeting with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee yesterday to discuss how such matters are handled and next week I shall be giving evidence to the Procedure Committee, which is also considering the matter. I hope that the collective wisdom of many hon. Members will enable us to find a better solution, and a better way of dealing with these matters in future.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food be able to come to the House next week to explain why full safety clearance has been given to the apple spray Alar, given thatt the United States Environment Protection Agency has reached the interim conclusion that it causes cancer, and will he set about initiating the cancellation of its chemical licence?

Will there be an opportunity for the House to discuss the reform of the legal services before the Government give their response to the representations made following their Green Papers?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall refer the first point to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and if a statement is necessary, he will make one. I cannot anticipate that.

I realise that the reform of the legal services is an important matter and that a significant number of discussion documents have gone out. As I have said in previous weeks, I do not see myself being able to find time for a debate on the Green Papers, although if the Government come forward with proposals, there will certainly be plenty of time to discuss them.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House ensure that the debate about the EEC next Thursday is wide enough to enable us to discuss the proposition that hon. Members should be encouraged—or at least able—to put their names forward for membership of the European Community in respect of constituencies in other countries?

Mr. Wakeham: That sounds an interesting subject, although whether it will be in order in the debate next week will depend on you, Mr. Speaker, rather than me.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): In answer to the first question the Leader of the House referred to a change in the law affecting 35 million citizens. Does he appreciate that the cause of our complaint and the reason why we should like to raise the matter next week is that to 10 million couples—20 million of those 35 million citizens —the poll tax has not been explained satisfactorily?

The right hon. Gentleman has announced the business up to Monday, 22 May—the date when regulations Nos. 4 and 5 of the poll tax enforcement regulations come into force. In other words, it is the registration date from which the 21 days apply. Why has the House not so far debated any of the poll tax regulations, even though prayers have been laid? The 40-day period has long since passed and new orders have had to be put on the Order Paper. That date—22 May—is the key date. For those who had poll tax registration forms today, last week and the week before, the 21-day period does not start until 22 May. Why has the House not debated those regulations?

Mr. Wakeham: I think it best if I deal with the question of debates through the usual channels. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's assertion that my right hon. Friend was wrong in what he said in his statement. However, that is a matter not for me but for the court next Monday.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will there be an opportunity in the near future to have a debate on general defence policy, which is very much sought after by Her Majesty's loyal Opposition?

Mr. Wakeham: I realise that. I cannot promise a debate next week, but a debate will come pretty soon, I think.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early statement on the future of Short Brothers, Belfast? Is he aware that the company announced yesterday that there were to be 700 redundancies? It is vital that the House should have an opportunity, at the earliest possible date, to question the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about the reason for these redundancies and discover whether they are a consequence of the past and present performance of the company or whether they are in preparation for privatisation. We need an early opportunity to press these questions.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman will have a chance to question my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at Question Time next Thursday. The appropriate level of employment in Shorts is a matter for the management of Shorts and not for the Government to decide.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Given that it appears that the only way in which one can ensure a next-day delivery of first-class mail is to have an ex-parte injunction banning the delivery, is there any prospect of having a debate on the future of the Post Office monopoly?

Mr. Wakeham: That is an important subject, but I cannot find time to debate it next week.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have an early debate on the Government's propaganda machine? We could then discuss water authorities. Without any authority, they are embarking on a campaign on behalf of the Government, in which about £30 million is involved. At the same time, the Yorkshire water authority is proposing to sell off customers' names, as it claims, to raise revenue—revenue that, presumably, will work on behalf of the Government. Is it not time that we had a debate, a statement or Government intervention to stop a public service industry, which is publicly owned at the moment, propagandising on behalf of the Government?

Mr. Wakeham: If the debate next Tuesday is not about that matter and some related interests, I have no idea why the Opposition sought to put it down for debate. Opposition members will get a firm answer in that debate, and matters will certainly be clearer afterwards. The advertisements about which the hon. Gentleman is talking are purely commercial matters for the companies concerned to decide.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that, further to the EEC scrutiny point, there will be dismay among members of the Select Committee on European Legislation and other hon. Members that the Lingua programme documents are not to be debated next week, before the meeting of the Education Council of Ministers on Monday 22 May? The Select Committee has recommended those documents for debate. Does that not make a laughing stock of the whole business of scrutiny?

Mr. Wakeham: I had a meeting with the Chairman of the Select Committee yesterday. I thought that we made considerable progress in identifying ways in which we might be able to improve some of those matters. I recognise that they are not totally satisfactory at the moment, but I am struggling to find better ways of doing it.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Myrthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The Leader of the House has clarified the position of the Football Spectators Bill. Apart from the utter insensitivity of the Bill towards Hillsborough, will not the Bill come rather late to the House? Will he give the House an assurance that an early guillotine will not be imposed in an attempt to railroad the Bill through the House, when genuine divisions of opinion do not necessarily conform to party lines? Will he at least make sure that the Football Spectators Bill is not part of an elective dictatorship?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have decided to have a pause in the passage of the Football Spectators Bill to allow a period of reflection following the Hillsborough tragedy. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear, it is our intention to complete the Bill this Session. The Bill enables us to deal with the long-standing problem of football hooliganism and take account of any relevant recommendations that Lord Justice Taylor might make. Questions about guillotines and matters of that sort are totally hypothetical at this stage.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. Friend able to announce any progress in the long-standing discussions about sheltering from the weather our constituents who want to visit this place? If we can erect a permanent-looking structure on the Terrace, why can we not think of something for our constituents?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate that these matters have taken rather a long time, but, as my hon. Friend knows, some quite complex discussions are taking place with those along the passage and with others. We are seeking to make progress. I hope that it will not be too long in coming. I apologise to my hon. Friend for the delay.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): When he considers the business for next week will the Leader of the House bear in mind that the House is under an obligation to find time in July for a debate on Hong Kong? In Hong Kong, about 5 million people for whom the House is responsible are anxious to hear the views of the House on the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the revised basic law draft for which the consultative period will terminate before the House resumes in the autumn. This is a major issue in which the House has an important part to play. Will the Leader of the House confirm that time will be found for a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: We must first wait for the report, and then we will consider the question of any debate.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Further to the questions that have been directed to my right hon. Friend about foreign affairs, does he not agree that there have been some remarkable changes all over the world with direct or indirect effect on Britain? Will he recall that he was sympathetic some time ago to the idea of having regional debates on foreign affairs? Does my right hon. Friend, therefore, not conclude that the logic of those two

important factors means that we need to have many more foreign affairs debates than we have been used to in the past?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that my hon. and learned Friend is keen on having more foreign affairs debates, but there are only a certain number of days in the year and only a certain number of debates can be fitted into that period. I am sympathetic to my hon. and learned Friend's point of view and I will do my best. However, I cannot do the impossible with the number of days available.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): In view of the Government Actuary's report on our pension scheme, and the possibility of the Treasury reducing its contribution because it feels that there is too much money in it, should there not be a debate about it in the House? After all, hon. Members are concerned, for example, about the widows of late Members, whose benefits could be increased if there is more money in the fund than is necessary. Surely, we should have some say about what happens to our money.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that there is much doubt that before too long the House will have some say in those matters—whatever I might think about it. I hope that I can help the hon. Gentleman by telling him the position. I have been in touch with his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who is the chairman of the managing trustees. I have suggested that he and I, together with his fellow trustees, should have a meeting in the near future to discuss how best to deal with those matters.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, regrettably, his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dyke) is totally unacceptable? The Lingua programme extends European competence into a field in which it has not had competence before. There will be a meeting of the Council on this subject on Monday week, when a decision might be taken. If we have not debated it in the meantime, Parliament will have no influence over an extension of Community competence. Will my right hon. Friend do something to increase the power and influence of this House over European legislation? We hear today that the European Commission is conniving and cobbling together with the European Parliament measures on exhaust emission, which are against the recommendations of the Council and against the interests of the environment, but which are in favour of increasing the power of the European institutions that are cobbling this together. This is totally unacceptable. There is nothing we can do about it, because we cannot assemble a blocking minority in the European Council. Could my right hon. Friend look into this? The Government got us into this mess. It is totally undemocratic. How the hell are we going to get out of it?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend understandably went rather wider than the question of next week's business. I have already indicated that I regret that I have not been able to fit in the debate that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) wanted. I will look into the matter and see what, if anything, can be done about it.

So far as my responsibilities go—the scrutiny by the House on European legislative matters—I agree that matters are not satisfactory and I am seeking to find a way that will improve the situation. On the more general matters of European policy, I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made her position and that of the Government extremely clear.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that every year some 70,000 African elephants are illegally killed and that 80 per cent. of the world trade in ivory, much of which goes through Hong Kong and other places in the far east, is also illegal? Today the Tanzanian Government have made application under the 1973 Washington convention for the registration of the African elephant as an endangered species.

Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for the Government to arrange a debate on this subject in which they could indicate their support for the Tanzanian application for registration and the actions that they are taking, within their power and purview, to prevent trade from illegal ivory coming through the British Crown colony of Hong Kong, which is a major conduit and a major cause of the death of so many African elephants and other endangered species?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, without looking into this, I cannot accept everything that the hon. Gentleman has said. Nevertheless, I recognise that this is a serious matter and although I cannot promise him an early debate on it, I shall certainly bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. I shall either write to the hon. Gentleman myself or I shall ask my right hon. and learned Friend to do so.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): While welcoming the debate next week on the EEC and appreciating the contraints on Government time, may I ask my right hon. Friend to confirm that the last time that we had a debate in this House on non-EEC foreign affairs was in November last year on the Queen's Speech? In view of the enormous and significant changes taking place in Eastern Europe, will my right hon. Friend at least give some thought to the possibility of a debate on Eastern Europe, especially in the light of next month's visit by General Jaruzelski of Poland?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right that there is a need for such a debate and I wish that I could find an early date on which to hold one. However, although I shall do my best, I cannot promise such a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Leader of the House aware that the non-elected Tories on the Bassetlaw district health authority are seeking to have the Bassetlaw district general hospital opt out of the current administration? Surely that action is illegal since there has been no legislation on this matter and it is being taken solely on the strength of the published White Paper. Will the right hon. Gentleman check up on this with his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, on whose advice 50 hospitals have now decided to opt out? The Secretary of State for Health must be using some loophole that goes against the traditions of the House if he is encouraging such actions before we have seen a Bill, held a Committee stage or had the enactment of any legislation whatsoever.

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is absolutely right to seek

[Mr. Wakeham]

discussions among the hospitals to ascertain what sort of interest there is for the proposals in his White Paper. There will be legislation soon enough. The hon. Gentleman's real problem is that so many hospitals seem to think that this is an interesting proposal.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend find the time next week to arrange a debate on the attempted Minorco takeover of Consolidated Gold Fields, bearing in mind that the Takeover Panel has recently sought to move the goalposts and that some of us feel that the takeover should not be permitted to go ahead until we have had a chance to debate it on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: That bid has been cleared by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and it is for the shareholders to decide on its merits. The question of any Takeover Panel ruling is a matter for the panel and I cannot therefore promise my hon. Friend an early debate in the House on that matter.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Leader of the House has referred to conversations with myself about European scrutiny. May I thank him for giving me the opportunity of presenting the views of the Scrutiny Committee and say that we look forward to his evidence to the Select Committee on Procedure in due course?

Will he turn his attention to two items of business for next week? In relation to Thursday's business, is he aware that the Scrutiny Committee believes that it will be more useful for six-monthly debates to be prospective, even if on a subject suggested by the Government, rather than retrospective? In respect of the business that he announced for Wednesday, which he said was "control of concentrations", will he confirm that that is a proposal to transfer control of mergers from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's Government to the Commission in Brussels? If it is, does he think that even at this early stage, one and a half hours after ten o'clock is a suitable length of time for debates of such importance, and will he reconsider that?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said about our meeting yesterday. I am glad that he is looking forward to the evidence that I shall be giving to the Procedure Committee next week and I look forward to his evidence which, I believe, will be given the week afterwards, although I am not absolutely sure of the date.

I shall certainly look at the terms of the motion for next Thursday to see whether there is any way in which I can meet the hon. Gentleman's request. I must confess that when I saw that I was to announce a debate on "control of concentrations" I was not too sure what it meant, but it is to do with EC matters in relation to company mergers, which is an important issue. The question of how long the debate should be is a matter for discussion through the usual channels.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 835?

[That this House condemns the actions of the Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation and the honourable Member for Rossendale, the Junior Minister at the Department of the Environment, in ignoring the wishes of the tenants of Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation to have a ballot so that they can determine the landlord of their choice, instead of having housing associations foisted upon them; and calls upon the Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation and the Department of the Environment to give the tenants the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights.]

Will my right hon. Friend find time to debate this early-day motion. It incorrectly asserts that the tenants of the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation will not be given a choice about their future landlord. Should not that mistake be set right? Should we not have an opportunity to put forward the advantage of housing associations over Socialist borough landlords?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. It is an important issue and I wish that I could find time to debate my hon. Friend's point. I can confirm that there is no question of denying tenants the right to choose their ultimate landlord. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has made it clear that there will be a ballot about transfer of housing when the necessary legislation is in place, and that tenants' wishes will be respected. Meanwhile, the housing associations are being used on a temporary basis as management agents at Warrington.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The Leader of the House has already agreed that there should be a debate on the Select Committee's report on toxic waste and the Government's response to it, which many people consider disappointing. When does he envisage that the debate will take place? Have he and his right hon. and learned Friend the Government Chief Whip not been able to pencil a date into their diaries for that debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important subject but I cannot add anything to what I have already said.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Why is the Second Reading of the Human Organ Transplants Bill to be taken in Committee upstairs rather than on the Floor of the House? My right hon. Friend knows that a small number of people are opposed to the Bill and they will be deprived of the opportunity to participate in the discussions. Those, who like me, take such a view, feel resentful that we shall be unable to make our voices heard on the matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that my hon. Friend holds views on this matter. I think that he will agree that his views are probably in a minority but, nevertheless, they must be respected. The reason for the Bill being considered by a Second Reading Committee is that that is what the House resolved to do. The Bill will return to the Floor of the House on Third Reading. I do not know whether my hon. Friend is on the Committee.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it be possible to have a Question Time slot every time the so-called Secretary of State for the Environment is taken to court? That has become such a regular event that perhaps there should be such a slot.

Has the Leader of the House had discussions with the Home Secretary about the proposed rally this weekend of Nazi fanatics? Why are well-known Nazi and fascist fanatics being allowed into Derbyshire for an event that is deeply deplored by the overwhelming majority of British people? Why has there not been a statement from the Home Secretary?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's first suggestion would have the disadvantage of guaranteeing that he would be at every session to ask a silly question. The hon. Gentleman's second point is serious and I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I agree with those who say that next Thursday's debate should be prospective. Will the House have the opportunity soon to debate the interesting work on new roads and railway lines said to be taking place in the Department of Transport? Will we be able to link that with the recent welcome statement by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury about abolishing the Ryrie rules and therefore allowing a new increase in private capital, in addition to expanded public provision?

Mr. Wakeham: I can imagine that my hon. Friend's last point, which is important, could well form part of the discussion in the later stages of the Finance Bill. The matter relating to roads is important, but I cannot promise an early debate on it, although I feel that it will arise in one form or another before too long.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), the Leader of the House said that he would refer to the Home Secretary the problem of the proposed European neo-Nazi gathering in the east midlands. Is he aware that what is required is not a referral but a statement tomorrow, or it will be too late to prevent people with criminal records for violence from entering the country, and too late to prevent the event from occurring?

Is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that we need a full debate on the infiltration of Nazi movements into this country, not least because of the rally on 27 May at which, apparently, there is to be a skinhead concert organised by a man with a criminal record for violence —a person called Ian Stuart of the Screwdriver band? We must take these matters seriously. For some reason that I do not understand the Home Secretary, who is a resolute opponent of Facism and Nazism, has not replied to the letter I wrote to him 10 days ago. May we have an urgent statement?

Mr. Wakeham: I still think that I was right to answer the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) by saying that I would refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. My right hon. Friend is of course already aware of these matters and is no doubt taking whatever action is appropriate. However, in view of the concern I shall see to it that this is drawn to his attention.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend undertake to arrange for a suitable amendment to be tabled to the Opposition's Supply day motion on publicity next Tuesday, so that the House may consider the position of the Leader of the Opposition who, among others, has to receive mendacious literature on housing, education and other matters from Ealing council? Can arrangements be made for him to be sent the true facts about the issues on which the council has misinformed people?

Further, can an amendment be tabled to enable the House to consider the wrongful expenditure of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money on minority interests which discriminate against the majority? I have in my hand a leaflet that Ealing council has put out at public expense advertising a self-defence course in Ealing that is only for lesbians, thereby discriminating against all other women.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government will certainly consider what is the appropriate amendment to table to the Opposition motion for the debate next week. We cannot do that until we have seen the terms of their motion. There is nothing to stop my hon. Friend tabling an amendment to the motion if he wants to do so. Which amendments are selected is a matter not for me but for Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the Home Secretary is still in charge of the BBC? Does he realise that there has been a series of strikes there in the past few weeks? When many of us on the Labour Benches visited the picket lines at Bush house, Broadcasting house and the Television centre we were astonished to learn that there are people at the BBC who take home £80 a week, while others, such as Wogan, pick up millions. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the top four directors at the BBC have had a salary increase of 33 per cent. in the course of the past year, bringing their total earnings between them to £340,000? What is good enough for Tory apparatchiks at the top of the BBC should be good enough for those doing the donkey work.

Mr. Wakeham: I can understand that the hon. Gentleman has had a hard week. He has spent the week having his basic Socialist principles marketed by other people and I do not think that he liked it very much. I can understand why he asks such a ridiculous question.

The Home Secretary is not in charge of the BBC, as the hon. Gentleman knows full well. The BBC operates under an independent charter; perhaps some of us might have different views on it if it did not.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend has arranged for a debate on Europe on Thursday. As, in future, many decisions that affect Britain will be taken by the Council of Ministers, will he arrange for such decisions to be discussed in future at a reasonable hour in this House a short time before Ministers attend the council, so that hon. Members may express their views on matters that are vitally important to our constituents?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is quite right. Part of the review should enable us to have debates earlier, with at least a number of them being at a more convenient time. Perhaps there might be a better allocation between the debates that are held upstairs and those which are late at night. It requires agreement with hon. Members in all parts of the House. That is what I am seeking to obtain.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the Leader of the House arrange next week for time to be available for the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) who replied to question No. 3 this afternoon to withdraw the statement that he made about a school in my constituency, Ellesmere road? The statement was totally misleading and scurrilous. It will do nothing to resolve the small problems in that inner-city school. May I inform the House that this morning, contrary to what the Minister said, there was an assembly with parents, teachers and pupils present? While there have been some small problems, it does no credit to the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and try to exploit the problems that we have

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in the inner city. The school is on an even keel and it is well managed. It is under an education authority that has been commended by Her Majesty's inspectors.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a minute the strictures of the hon. Gentleman, but I shall certainly refer to my hon. Friend the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate in the near future on the rights of our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland to representation in the House by the mainstream political parties in view of the overwhelming vote yesterday at the Perth conference by the Scottish Conservatives in support of Irish Conservatives who wish to have official Conservative candidates to vote for? Surely he must think that it is wrong that we exclude 1·5 million of our citizens from full participation in the political process that we all enjoy.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important point and that my hon. Friend has strong views on it. I am not sure that it is a matter appropriate for debate in the House, certainly not at present.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Leader of the House was quite wrong to dismiss in such a peremptory fashion the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) when he asked for a debate about the BBC dispute. It affects the House because BBC listeners were deprived yesterday of the opportunity to listen to the delightful experience, in which we were all able to participate, of Gummer-baiting. We should have an opportunity to debate the matter. It seems appropriate that we should discuss a dispute that has been caused by management at the top of the BBC giving themselves 30 per cent. increases while telling the rest of the workers in the corporation that they have to take a pay cut. Will the Leader of the House reconsider his answer? Can we have a debate on the position within the BBC? Perhaps we could combine it with a discussion about televising Parliament.

Mr. Wakeham: We have debates on broadcasting from time to time but, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, pay within the British Boradcasting Corporation is a matter for the management and the staff to negotiate and deal with. It is not in my view a matter that is suitable for debate in the House. That is the point. With regard to a television debate, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know, though not as pleased as I am, that the report has been completed and will be published in the very near future.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): You are a real expert, Mr. Speaker; you always leave quality to the very end. Is the Leader of the House aware that I serve on a Select Committee and work like billy-oh? One person who comes to the Select Committee is a marvellous man from a wonderful Department, the Parliamentary Commissioner. Is the Leader of the House aware that many hon. Members from both sides of the House make use of that wonderful Department? Since I have been here we have never had a debate on the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner. I ask the Leader of the House to pull his socks up and consider having a debate on the report on the Floor of the House so that people outside as well as in the House may know about the Department and exactly where they should go with their problems.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly share the high opinion that the hon. Gentleman has of himself, and I think that it is also shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

This is the first time since I have been Leader of the House that I have been asked for such a debate and I shall look at the matter. I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall arrange such a debate in the near future, but, coming from him, the request has a better chance than if it came from anyone else.

Points of Order

4.15 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter on which I have given you notice, albeit brief.

The answers to questions 14 and 15, answered by the Foreign Secretary or a junior Minister, were unfortunately omitted from yesterday's *Hansard*. I am sure that that was simply an error, but on this occasion it was a sad one because question 15——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): —was your question.

Mr. Janner: It was my question, of course.

I asked a question to which, not surprisingly, the Government did not give an answer. It concerned the Government's deplorable failure to take any action on the proposed Nazi rally this weekend. That should not have been omitted from *Hansard*. May I ask, please that that matter be drawn to the attention of the Editor of *Hansard* and that there be some procedure so that when an emergency is recognised there can be a special printing of the missing material, which can perhaps be delivered as a leaflet to at least 35 million homes?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. and learned Member for drawing that to my attention. In the interests of accuracy, I must tell him that question 14 was answered with question 3 and was correctly reported in *Hansard*.

Mr. Janner: Only mine was left out.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, the hon. and learned Gentleman's question was left out. That was a mistake and it will be corrected in *Hansard*. The missing text will have been reinstated when the bound volume is published.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have a duty to announce to the House when any hon. Member is charged with a criminal offence, but I am unclear whether that would be the case if a Minister was imprisoned for contempt. Since the leaflets that were the subject of an injunction yesterday are apparently still being delivered today, it would be interesting to know whether the Secretary of State for the Environment is in imminent danger—welcomed by many millions—of being committed to prison. We should know whether it would be incumbent on you, Mr. Speaker to make the necessary announcement.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question. If, sadly, any hon. Member were to be arrested, I have a duty to report that, but the hon. Gentleman raises a different matter.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. A number of people in my constituency have expressed concern that yesterday the Minister for Local Government claimed that the London borough of Islington was distributing misleading leaflets about the poll tax. That is not the case. The leaflets are accurate. They have been legally cleared and no action has been taken against the borough council. What can be done in the House to correct the information given by the right hon. Gentleman so that the people of Islington can be assured that the information they are receiving from the borough council is correct, in contrast to the information that they are receiving from the Government?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has just done it.

"Working for Patients"

[Relevant documents: Fifth Report from the Social Services Committee of Session 1987-88 on the Future of the National Health Service (HC 613) and the Government Response thereto (Cm. 599).]

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

In view of the number of hon. Members who wish to participate in the debate, I propose to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 and 9 o'clock. However, I appeal to those hon. Members who are fortunate enough to be called before that time to bear that limit in mind.

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That this House approves the programme of reform of the National Health Service set out in the White Paper, Working for Patients (Cm. 555), and the reaffirmation of the basic principles of the National Health Service which will continue to be available to all, regardless of income and financed mainly out of taxation; and believes that the proposals in the White Paper will raise the standards of all of the health service to the high standard of the best and will lead to an extension of patient choice, a more responsive health service, better value for money and an even better standard of health care for the decade to come.

I returned yesterday from a 24-hour visit to Geneva, where I took part in the affairs of the World Health Assembly, an annual gathering of Health Ministers from the member states of the United Nations who discuss the affairs of the World Health Organisation and health core policy in general.

I was struck during my brief visit by the fact that the subject of health care is now remarkably similar in many countries. Indeed, I dare assert that in practically every developed country, on both sides of the iron curtain, Governments are now involved to some degree in quite drastic reform of their health care systems.

What we are addressing—the British Government have been addressing this consistently throughout our period in office—is a great change in the problems confronting health care systems. There is an explosion in the cost of health care of all kinds. The level of demand for health care is rising at a rapid rate, largely because of changing demography and the huge increase in the proportion of elderly people in our population and in similar countries.

In countries such as ours, the expectations of patients and professionals are much higher than they were even a decade ago, and medical advance and rising expectations go on remorselessly. It is absorbing when considering health care policy to note that, whenever one looks at the affairs of a great health care system—in this case the National Health Service—one is looking at one of the great challenges facing Governments throughout the developed world. It is a challenge that must be tackled without unnecessary delay and it must be solved correctly if our great health care system is to rise to the increased costs, increased expectations, increased demands and satisfy our population.

I can promise nobody that this process of reform will be free from political controversy, because when this trade union of Health Ministers is gathered, it is amazing to discover that health is at the heart of public and political controversy in just about every major state one can mention, for the reasons I have given.

In some countries, Governments are finding great difficulty in making progress. In the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, an extremely controversial programme has been put through, largely aimed at getting down what they regard as their unacceptable costs and rescuing a bankrupt social insurance system. It is not adding to the popularity of the Government there as they carry that through.

In Hungary, on the other side of the iron curtain, the Minister of Health has been attempting to introduce new charges for patients, for their prescriptions and pharmaceutical goods, and to introduce the concept of private insurance and so on—at present a popular idea throughout the Socialist world. When I met her, I got the impression that she had had some setbacks and was having to abandon the controversial proposals that she was keen on a month or so ago.

In New Zealand, a great report was produced for the reform of that country's health service, taking its starting point from our Griffiths proposals of a few years ago and setting out proposals for a market for health care which I found attractive. The Socialist Government in New Zealand have abandoned those proposals in the face of resistance from their medical profession and are now starting again to tackle the problems of management and use of resources.

Opposition Members have a great narrowness of view on these issues. It is important for us to place in context what we are doing. We are tackling problems that are bound to face any responsible Government in modern circumstances in coping with the pace of change in health care. In this country we are determined to be more successful than others have been, and we have begun to address these problems many years before most other developed countries.

Some of my hon. Friends—indeed, some of the faint-hearted on both sides of the House—may ask, "If there are always political difficulties, why bother to reform the Health Service at all?" Last weekend Brian Walden, with whose views I seem to agree more nowadays, implied more or less as much and invited the Government to give up reforming the NHS because, as he put it, it was impossible to talk common sense to the British public about it. He implied that it should be allowed to decline unchanging and be left to its own devices. Other Ministers abroad would agree about the political difficulties.

It is an easy subject on which to alarm patients as soon as any reform is advocated. It is a feature of great professions, here and abroad, that they are instinctively suspicious about change and jealous of their practices and procedures. It is therefore necessary to embark on reform realising that it will always be a difficult and sometimes controversial process.

The reason why the Government have published their White Paper and embarked on this reform is straightforward. We want the British NHS to rise to these challenges, with which others are having to contend. We want to ensure that in this country we have a better NHS serving all our patients, even in the face of those challenges. We shall not be overwhelmed by the pressures and, once reformed, our Health Service will remain in the forefront of the world's health care systems.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way shortly, but if I do so often, I shall take too long to speak in what will anyway be a crowded debate.

There are other straightforward reasons for reforming the National Health Service and for remedying problems that already exist. Although the Opposition are on the point of producing policy proposals of their own, they sound sometimes as though the Health Service belongs to them and is a perfect, unchangeable and unimproveable system which does not require reform. Although the present system is excellent, and although its principles of being free at the point of delivery, being financed out of taxation, and providing treatment on the ground of medical priority must be retained, its delivery of health care is not always perfect and could be improved.

The most obvious perception that people have of the service's inadequacies is the great variation in waiting times for certain types of surgery, which vary from place to place throughout the country—sometimes for quite inexplicable reasons—by comparison with other health authorities whichse allocations have been made in similar ways, but which in some cases keep up with the demand for specialties better than their neighbours.

Anyone managing the service and trying to identify where the taxpayers' money goes will find wide variations in the use to which that money is put. I refer to the vexed subject of drug and prescribing costs, which now total £2,000 million annually and are rising rapidly. Some general practitioners spend nearly twice as much as others on drugs per patient, even though they appear to have similar patient lists. Some GPs refer more than 20 times as many of their patients to hospital as do others. A fourfold variation is quite common, and will obviously have an effect on the ability of people locally to deliver patient care.

If one examines the detail and some of the things that the introduction of better management has started to throw up, it becomes clear that anyone who imagines that the Health Service is perfect as it is and should not be improved, but merely requires more money, is deceiving himself. In Lancashire, for example, we found a specialist in community medicine who refused to allow GPs to perform child immunisation, with the consequence that uptake rates in the area concerned were amazingly low. A London ophthalmologist decided to keep discharge decisions for all his patients to himself, but toured his wards only once a week. As a result, some of his patients waited six days in a hospital bed before they could be discharged. I could cite many similar examples. They have been dealt with, but many more have yet to be.

One great variation is the way in which patients are treated as people. The sensitivity that is exercised and the willingness to give information to patients vary from place to place, and there are many ways in which performance in that regard could be improved. That is what lies behind our White Paper reforms. If one is to reform the Health Service, one might as well reform it in a way that not only protects the service but gets rid of inequalities and raises its performance to the standards already achieved by the best, so that access to health care across the country is the same.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, despite the rather sad and Luddite-like opposition of the British Medical Association and of the Labour party, once the public see the results of his far-sighted reforms in establishing a competitive market for health care—something there has never been before—they will appreciate that that is the only way of improving the delivery of health care to all our people?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): There was nothing wrong with the Luddites.

Mr. Clarke: I hear some critical cries from Opposition Members. Probably my ancestors and those of many of my constituents were Luddites, so I must be careful; Ned Ludd came from my part of the world. However, parts of Nottinghamshire have moved on by comparison to those represented by our opponents and most people in the Health Service accept the case for change that I make.

What they are reluctant to do is to agree to specific proposals. We have to explain that the White Paper is necessary, for the reasons that I have given, and then take them with us in implementing the changes to produce the improved situation.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the Minister accept that when looking at differences in prescribing the quality and quantity of drugs, there is some merit in looking at various areas? If area is compared with area they are never alike. Perhaps the Minister would look at the question of a practice in Gleneath which was accused by his Department of over-prescribing, to the extent that an extra post was created for a doctor to look at it. He found out that there was no over-prescribing but that the prescriptions were necessary because of the prevalence of dust-related diseases in that area.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with that entirely. It is obviously not the case that all variations between areas of practices have no clinical explanation, but we also know that in some cases there is no clinical explanation and that there are places where the medicine chests of patients are full of drugs that they do not want. Some practices carry on repeat prescribing for patients whom they have not seen for a very long time. Where those cases occur and where there are no clinical reasons, if we can catch that waste we can divert the resources to better use within the Health Service. We are aiming to ensure that where there are no clinical reasons, and only there, high prescribing costs are tackled.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. and learned Friend make it absolutely plain that although the immunology rate and expectation of life in Lancashire are bad, in Lancaster itself we are extremely good at immunology and the expectation of life is higher than the national average?

Mr. Clarke: The case that I described was in one part of Lancashire. The practice has now been stopped and the situation has been improved. I know that my hon. Friend is very pleased with the advances being made and the level of care attained by the health authority in her constituency.

Going on, therefore, to the need to carry people with the reforms, I believe that, despite the formidable difficulties of embarking upon reform, we are already making progress in satisfying people inside and outside the service that this is a sensible way to proceed in order to make sure that our National Health Service remains as good as it should be. In recent weeks, between the publication of the White Paper and this debate, there have been a number of very interesting developments. I can

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certainly think of three, that I will begin by citing, which show that the Health Service is already on the move in the direction of accepting worthwhile reforms.

The first development, which I will deal with briefly, because we debated it last week, is the advance we have made on the contract for the payment of general practitioners. I am glad to say that last week we reached agreement with the negotiators for the profession. They have agreed to commend to the profession a new form of contract which offers great benefits to the service, to patients and to GPs, particularly those who do the work and hit the highest standards.

We accepted that it was desirable to have a new contract, that we should set performance targets for the vaccination of children and the screening of women. The Government's targets were accepted for the highest payments. Those practices where a doctor makes a night visit to patients so that they see a doctor from the particular practice will be paid at a higher rate than those that use commercial deputising services and it is agreed that capitation is a good reflection of the hard work that GPs do. All those things are now accepted and I believe that the way is clear for raising the standards of the family doctor service.

Progress on that one front, which was in the air when the White Paper was produced, shows what can be achieved on other fronts where there is still controversy. We asserted to each other in discussions about the contract that we shared exactly the same aims in efforts to improve the general medical service. By sitting down together and talking about how best those aims could be achieved we were able to make progress and agree on reforms in the service for the benefit of patients. That approach offers great prospects for the other features of the White Paper. Discussion and the support of the profession are plainly a key element in ensuring that satisfactory progress is maintained.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): The fourth objective in the White Paper is particularly welcome: appointment times that mean something, and an attack on waiting lists. Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that he will receive support from both sides of the House and from the profession to ensure that that objective is implemented swiftly?

Mr. Clarke: I do not wish to discuss leaked documents about the Labour party's proposals, but Labour seems to have pinched part of its health proposals from our White Paper. On that subject Labour seems to be supporting us. I believe that the public support us very strongly, and we now look to health authorities to implement that support in practice throughout the country.

My second point about the progress that we have made is that many of the changes proposed for the rest of the service in the White Paper have already been accepted, and I find that they do not provoke controversy in discussions with the profession. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is trying to intervene: I do not think that he and others appreciate the extent to which discussions are turning on those parts of the White Paper that still pose difficulties. People have not noticed that key proposals are being accepted by consultants, nurses and others throughout the service.

Let me try to help the House to understand why that acceptance makes me already sure that the necessary changes will come about. I think that it would be difficult for any hon. Member to claim that he had recently met a consultant or nurse who opposed the idea of better financial management to enable both doctors and nurses and the management to know more about what they are doing and where the resources go.

It is now some weeks since I met either a consultant or a nurse who did not think that medical audit or quality control—another key issue—were a good idea, and who did not accept the Government's framework. There has been a dramatic change in opinion since four or five years ago. I have worked in the Department before, and all these ideas have quite a long history. A few years ago it was difficult to find a consultant who did not regard the idea of financial management as a commercial intrusion in his affairs, and the idea of clinical budgeting as a threat to his clinical freedom. Medical audit, when first canvassed by the royal colleges three or four years ago, was regarded as a significant threat to clinical freedom by a large proportion of the profession.

What has now been accepted with enthusiasm is the idea that the Health Service needs to know how it spends its resources. It needs management information so that it can control the use of those resources, and the continuing quality checks that medical audit will ensure. Because of that acceptance, such proposals are about to become matters of little controversy and less interest in the outside world.

A great transformation will be wrought in the Health Service. The age of the computer, of information technology and of management decisions based on a knowledge of what things cost and where the vast resources go will come into the Health Service as it came into most other giant organisations a few years ago. Personal involvement in quality and output and the comparison of performance with that in other parts of the service will also come in. Management and clinicians will acquire far more information than they have ever had about what they are actually doing for their patients, how successful their activities are and how they are using their resources.

A few years ago my favourite comparison was between the NHS and the Indian state railway, because of its vast size and the way in which it was administered. Now the NHS is about to become an up-to-date, efficient, well-managed organisation. More information will become available, particularly to those at the sharp end —the doctors and nurses in the hospitals and practices. What we must decide is what to do with that information, and the White Paper shows the way, explaining how we can use our ability to control the service, improve its performance and serve patients better.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Has the Secretary of State seen the latest edition of "Conservative Newsline", which contains a large photograph of him under the slogan

"Our commitment to the NHS is absolute"?

Out of the same newspaper flutters a glossy leaflet from a company called Prime Health Plus advertising private medical insurance. Does he understand that such cynicism is the basis of many people's failure to take seriously the Government's plans for the National Health Service?

Mr. Clarke: My commitment to personal choice is also absolute. Every country in the developed world, including most behind the iron curtain, is now developing private health care systems. Only the British Labour party continues to believe that they are an unwanted intrusion into health care. The reforms of the National Health Service will ensure that private health care in Britain has a strong competitor in the National Health Service, and that people will look to the National Health Service for a comprehensive service and then decide for themselves whether there is some feature of it that they wish to add to or enjoy outside it.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): The Secretary of State said that he had consulted practically everyone in the National Health Service, but what consultations has he had with the public? Is he aware that in Nottinghamshire —his county and mine—Bassetlaw health authority has decided to set up a trust to opt out of Bassetlaw hospital? There has been no consultation with the public, almost all of whom voted Labour last Thursday. The decision has been taken by non-elected Tories with no consultation whatsoever with the public. The consultants that the right hon. and learned Gentleman talks about will all become directors and set their own salaries, as will the management who will decide about waiting lists and many other matters with no public consultation, agreement or referendum.

Mr. Clarke: Bassetlaw district health authority has taken no such decision in the terms described by the hon. Gentleman. I shall return to the reports about self-governing hospitals, but the hon. Gentleman misunderstands entirely what is happening in Bassetlaw. I shall return to that point.

I was explaining that we have achieved a substantial change of opinion within the Health Service that I would never have expected to happen five years ago. People accept the case for modern financial management and much more quality control. Almost without exception they accept that it will enable us to ensure that the money follows the patient to where the work is done best and reflects patient priorities.

The White Paper sets out a considered framework, over which we took a lot of time, showing how the new information can be used to create a better National Health Service for patients. How do we allocate resources best? In our opinion we should introduce competition and choice to ensure that resources go to where the quality of care and efficiency are highest. What about the role of the patients? We shall ensure a more patient-friendly and patient-led service by sending the resources with the patient to where, so far as is possible, he and his GP wish him to go.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment, but I wish to continue for a little longer.

The discussion on the Health Service has already moved on from when the White Paper was published. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have been approached by people concerned about the Health Service in the past three or four months, and I have no doubt that we have all been approached in the past week or two. Currently, the debate appears to be that we should go more slowly. All occupations have their buzz words, and the current buzz words are that it is all very interesting but we should have pilot studies, change the timetable and slow down.

Another theme that comes through strongly is the fear about the cost of taking on board the modern management systems which the Health Service, unlike other large businesslike organisations, has never had before.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is not a business.

Mr. Ashton: It is not a business.

Mr. Clarke: I said that it was businesslike. I welcome all those suggestions and I shall address them in my speech. I welcome them for one important reason. When people come to me suggesting that we should study and go more slowly and asking about the cost of introducing the new system, they are talking about how the changes should be implemented. Already, within three months the debate has moved on, except possibly in the Labour party. The debate among everyone else has moved on to how we implement and not whether we implement. It is that matter which I propose to address now.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a little while.

First, how we implement depends on what people mean by pace. We no longer have time for some traditional ways of tackling issues in the Health Service because they have not been so successful in the past. I will not agree to some great multidisciplinary committee being set up, which starts by studying a small number of pilot schemes and takes years over discussion and evaluation. In great public services of all kinds, one makes little progress by that means.

We had an experiment on financial management—the resource management initiative—which began on six pilot sites. There are still people at the head of the profession who say that we should not have extended that initiative until we had evaluated fully those six pilot schemes and there are even those who claim that we are in breach of an agreement. I must spell it out to such people that we are in breach of neither the spirit nor the letter of that agreement in the resource management initiative.

The initiative was so popular at the six pilot sites that we are now extending it to 50 more hospitals, which were contenders for the right to take part in the next phase of the resource management initiative. As the initiative rolls out, our methods will, of course, evolve. There will still be plenty of time to evaluate the first six sites and to apply the lessons as we extend the initiative to all hospitals. The rolling out of a process that we steadily evolve with the help of those who work on it—the doctors and nurses in the case of the resource management initiative—is a principle we can apply to other areas.

There are consultants who say they need financial management systems, but ask about the cost. We must be careful about the cost. We do not need all-singing, all-dancing computer and information technology systems straight away in every hospital and we should all be in favour of resisting salesmen who sell expensive equipment in the belief that everyone needs it. However, there will be costs. I have made it clear that, where cost is required up

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front for investment in new systems, we will provide it, over and above the money required to maintain progress in expanding patients' services.

We had already made £42 million available in the last public expenditure round in the autumn for rolling out the resource management initiative and other programmes for this year. Having seen where we are now and how matters are progressing, I can tell the House that there will be another £40 million of new money, over and above last year's settlement, available for the predictable costs of extending financial management systems in 1989-90. For the sake of accuracy, I had better tell the House about that in the words agreed with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who, as ever, has been helpful on these matters because he is committed to the National Health Service. I will be making available an extra £40 million in the current financial year to cover the additional work in the National Health Service and in my Department to begin implementing the review. That brings the total available for implementation this year to over £82 million, which will be used to provide financial information to doctors, to fund preparatory work and projects in, for example, general practitioner referral patterns and to provide resources both in staff and consultancy in my Department for the implementation of my proposals.

That new £40 million is intended to enable us to introduce the measures the doctors want. They are measures that the consultants inside the service welcome. The new money is being provided so that the costs of implementation do not cut into the provision of medical care for the patients and the planned rate of expansion. That is the second area in which there has been great progress since we produced the White Paper.

The third area in which we see progress in the Health Service was touched on by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw a moment ago. It is now being reported in the newspapers because of local discussions. Many units in the National Health Service are expressing interest in what we describe as self-governing status under the new contracting arrangements for the National Health Service. Moreover, although this has not yet appeared in the newspapers, large numbers of general practitioners are interested in the practice budgets that we propose, which give GPs more influence than ever before and more say about where their funds should go.

Let me return to the intervention of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw, as the same questions will be asked in many other places. Let us be clear what is coming in from National Health Service units to the regions. At the moment, we are receiving expressions of interest, and only expressions of interest. No hospital has yet decided to become a self-governing hospital; hospitals are in no position to decide that yet. At the moment we are receiving approaches from people who work in the service who are attracted by our new ideas and who recognise the potential for their patients. Very detailed discussions will have to follow before anyone can contemplate whether applications for self-governing status can go any further. We shall work on the applications, and the hospitals and units will acquire much more information about what is required. Everyone will be able to reach a more sensible conclusion once we know what is involved.

In the case of self-governing hospitals, everyone in the locality affected will want to know what care services the district health authority will require the self-governing hospital to provide—*[Interruption.]* I know that Opposition Members want to leap to oppose what they call opting out before they even know what it entails but we have reached a stage at which an explanation of what it entails might be forthcoming. We shall also need to know, in the case of every unit, what capital costs will be passed to the accounts of that unit. We shall need to know that in order to measure the unit's use of resources in future.

Mr. Spearing: This is all about money; it has nothing to do with health.

Mr. Clarke: The Labour party does not have a policy on health, except in so far as it relates to money. When asked what their policy on the Health Service is, all Labour Members ever say is that they will spend more money on it.

Our proposals are not all about money. I was about to say that there is another thing that we shall need to know about every self-governing unit. Given that all the units are attracted to our proposals by the proposition that they could improve the services that they offer their patients, they will need to work out their plans for the development and improvement of their services.

We shall need to consider how the board of trustees should be formed. We shall need to evaluate whether they are competent to run the unit. As the White Paper said, we shall also need to ensure that the consultants in the hospital are involved in the process of management.

At the moment, therefore, we are receiving expressions of interest in a proposal which is deemed to be a good idea by those who work in the Health Service. That process will be followed by a protracted period of discussion of all the details before any decisions are made. Whether we have a self-governing hospital anywhere in the National Health Service will depend on decisions made individually and case by case and probably at least a year from now. *[Interruption.]* Despite the wishes of the Opposition, we shall have an intelligent and continuing discussion with the units of what self-government will mean.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, given the old-fashioned and myopic attitude of the Labour party, it is interesting that more and more staffs, patients and expert managers are keen on the idea of opting out?

Hon. Members: That is not true.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, and the reward that some of them will receive for expressing interest is the same absurd barracking from the Labour party with which it is greeting our proposals today. The Opposition have attempted to misrepresent our proposals by implying that the hospitals will be leaving the National Health Service and suggesting that the idea poses a threat to staff and patients. Despite all that, the idea has been recognised as being of substantial interest to those who work in well over 100 units in the National Health Service, who see an advantage in having more freedom of action to develop their services and use their resources as they think best.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall not give way to barracking.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is not barracking.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Clarke: It is not barracking? The hon. Gentleman surprises me. I fail to see why I should give way to hon. Members who are already making all the noise that they want to make.

In due course we shall proceed in the same way with general practice budgets. I think that a large proportion of GPs with lists large enough to make them eligible for the first wave are very interested in the idea of controlling resources. *[Interruption.]* Of course; I am dealing with the pace at and methods by which we shall proceed. Of course no GP will tell anyone at the moment that he will have a practice budget. What he wants to know—[HON. MEMBERS: "They are not interested."] They are interested; they are in favour of the idea. What they and we will now need to do is to discuss how a general practice budget would operate. We shall need to discuss the level of resources required by a practice to have a GP budget and negotiate the right level of resources to enable GPs to feel confident that the system is, indeed, an advantage to them and to their patients.

The method of proceeding that I have described is based on the substantial response that we have had, which shows great interest in our ideas on the part of those engaged in hospitals and in general practice. We shall work on those ideas with people who have expressed willingness to discuss them. They will now be involved in a most protracted process of debate and discussion about the implications of the idea for the National Health Service and for their units, their hospitals and their practices in particular.

This is a careful, measured method of progressing with reform, working in partnership with those in the Health Service who want to work with us so that we can ensure that we make the use that we must make of the new information available to the service, in concert with those who recognise the new potential for improving the service.

Mr. Lofthouse: The Minister may be aware that, in the Pontefract health authority area, we are used to opting out. In 1987, on the basis of the allocation allowed by Government to shorten waiting lists, the Pontefract area health authority decided on a scheme to cover 500 operations at Pontefract general infirmary. It later changed its mind and allocated that money to the private hospital at Methley park which ended up performing 200 operations instead of 500. Three hundred of my constituents did not get their operations. That is the effect of opting out.

Mr. Clarke: The use of "opting out" to describe the process by which hospitals become self-governing is a grotesque misuse of the phrase. It says something for the parliamentary skills of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) that he gave the words a completely different meaning so that he could introduce a completely different issue. All health authorities are charged with the responsibility of using their resources in the most effective way for their patients. If health authorities can find a way of using spare capacity in the private sector to the benefit of their patients, paying marginal costs with part of their funds, I would encourage them to do so. I shall discuss with the hon. Gentleman at some other point the success or otherwise of the exercise in Pontefract.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall not give way again immediately. There are other important matters to which we must address ourselves now that the Health Service is beginning to move down the path of reform. With everyone accepting the need for new systems and quality control and with many people exploring the prospects for self-governing hospitals and for GP practice budgets, countless questions will need to be considered. That is why we produced eight working papers, although we could have produced twice that number with little difficulty. There are many other details to be worked out in concert with the profession.

People ask about the planning for a comprehensive service. District health authorities will remain charged with the legal duty to provide a comprehensive service. They will retain all the money in their hands apart from that which goes to GPs with practice budgets who will be providing their contribution to the service, to ensure that their funds are used and distributed in the locality to ensure ready access of all their residents to a comprehensive range of services of the required quality.

People ask about limitations on GPs' rights to refer. I have dealt with GPs' rights to refer. Many people have asked about what the GPs' position will be if the DHA has the money to place contracts and plan local services. They ask whether it will inhibit the GP's right to refer where he wishes. Under the present system, if it remains unreformed, the GP's theoretical total freedom to refer to whomever he or she wants is steadily diminishing. There is no ability to refer across administrative boundaries with any funds to finance the receiving hospital for the treatment of patients.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): When will the Secretary of State talk about patients, not money?

Mr. Clarke: One million patients every year are transferred, and the money does not go with them, and that is a principal cause of a large number of the financial crises that hit the newspapers. The hon. Lady is so wedded to what we have that she will preserve it. She likes the fact that, sometimes, efficient units run out of money precisely because there is no finance to go with the patients when a referral is made across administrative boundaries.

GPs will be involved in the new system. If they do not have practice budgets, they will be far more involved than ever before with district health authorities in deciding how a district authority uses its funds to provide a pattern of service, first, to meet its obligation to give a comprehensive service to their patients, and, secondly, to reflect that GPs' chosen pattern of referrals for the area. Our new system will give GPs much more ability than ever before to influence how resources are distributed, particularly in referring their own patients.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): One group of people whom I should like to be especially considered are the chronically sick on expensive medication. They believe that they will be unattractive to the average GP, particularly a GP on a practice budget, who will say, "This

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

patient will take too much of my budget, so I will try to push him somewhere else." Will such people be properly considered?

Mr. Clarke: I can give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance that, in a practice budget—[HON. MEMBERS: "How?"] A practice budget will be constructed to protect the clinical needs of the patient list. It is not even a new point; we thought of it miles before we published the White Paper. That is why we say that practice budgets should be negotiated. We cannot work on so much per head. We must negotiate with GPs a practice budget that reflects the age and chronic sickness of some of their patients and the actual costs that they are likely to incur. I give my hon. Friend an absolute assurance that nothing in our proposals will ever threaten a chronically sick patient with the risk of being refused the treatment or medicine that he or she will require.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. and learned Gentleman after so many interruptions. His answer seems to be at variance with an answer given by the Minister of State, who said that only in exceptional circumstances would that kind of provision be made. That worries those of us who are concerned about the chronically sick and disabled. Is the Minister giving the House a categorical assurance that all chronically sick and severely disabled people will have special provision with their GPs?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, who is sitting alongside me, will speak later. He told me that he does not believe that he said what the right hon. Gentleman alleged. No doubt any misunderstanding can be sorted out later.

As I have said, a practice budget will be negotiated on the basis that it needs to reflect the likely costs of dealing with a collection of patients, taking account of their age and chronic sickness. Obviously, it will proceed only on that basis.

There are other matters with which I have no time to deal now, but they are of great importance to those who work in the service and we must resolve them by the process of careful discussion over the coming months to make sure that our changes are implemented in the right way. First, medical teaching causes a great deal of concern. On undergraduate teaching, a working party is already established, involving my Department, the Department of Education and Science, the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council—all professional interests—to make sure that the need for medical teaching is protected.

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend has referred to that matter, as anxieties are building up in medical schools and universities. Representatives of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the medical schools are anxious to help, but they would like to know what their position will be as soon as possible.

Mr. Clarke: I realise that they are anxious about undergraduate teaching. Of course, a steering group reflecting the full range of interests is already considering that matter. There is also medical and nurse training. It is essential that the National Health Service, however organised, continues to produce the right supply of trained medical and nursing manpower. We must ensure that the training needs of the service are protected by our proposals, that medical schools are not threatened and that any additional costs are covered by our proposals. We must ensure that self-governing hospitals can be required to make their contribution to the required training effort of new doctors and nurses. Plainly, standards must be the same throughout the service, and they must be set by the royal colleges, as they are now. We need to talk through all those points.

For example, I refer to an extremely important policy contained in the document entitled "Achieving a Balance", which is of great importance to the Health Service. I remain totally committed to the principle of achieving a balance. However we organise the Health Service and however many hospitals are or are not self-governing, we must retain the ability to ensure that the possibility of achieving a balance is continued so that we have the right balance between training posts and career posts. That is what I see occupying the real debate.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will give way for definitely the last time.

Mrs. Winterton: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that over 40 per cent. of students reading medicine are women? Is he aware also that there are real anxieties that qualified women will not be able to get partnerships in practices and that medicine for women will be greatly affected by his proposals?

Mr. Clarke: I think that the proportion is a bit higher than that. It is my personal prediction, based on no expertise in the matter, that fairly early in the next century, the majority of doctors in this country will be female. We are obviously going in that direction.

Last week, we made changes in the GP contract, designed to meet the fear that we might unintentionally deter women from entering general practice. Changes are to be made in the system of basic practice allowance, and the way in which we look at practices as opposed to individual partners for GP contract purposes, which will meet those fears. I have always thought that the fears about deterring women from general practice were exaggerated. Nevertheless, we made moves to try to accommodate them, because we were anxious to ensure that we should not create any new artificial barriers to women entering general practice. The agreement shows that we thought we had reached——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Quite right.

Mr. Clarke: It is no good the hon. Gentleman trying to be more catholic than the Pope. The BMA is satisfied that we met that agreement. I fear that the hon. Gentleman is out of date.

We will proceed on the same basis. The matters to which I referred are ones on which we need a constructive dialogue with the profession. If people in the profession have fears about medical training, research and achieving a balance, they should first discuss them with us and accept our undertaking that we intend to meet them and, secondly, make a constructive contribution to the proposals about how to tackle them.

We have reached the stage at which everybody should move on from trying to find reasons why they are against

each and every proposal for change contained in the White Paper to making some contributions of their own if they can think of a better alternative. Some quite senior bodies in the Health Service have not yet reached the stage of putting forward anything other than criticism of what we put forward. The time has come for us to ask for their considered reactions on subjects such as research, medical training, and so on. They are beginning to come in.

I am sure that we will get no such contribution from the Labour party, but we will get a contribution from the service. Just as the Labour party has been left behind by our move on GPs' contracts, it will be left behind by its position on Health Service reform, as it sees the Health Service being transformed in front of its eyes, so that it provides a service that is better for the patients, allows patients a bigger influence on priorities inside the service, delegates more real management responsibilities locally and produces a service of which we can all be more proud.

The common sense of last Thursday will be carried forward in future discussions to ensure that we produce a better Health Service. No doubt sometimes we will face controversy and sometimes we will find persuasion easy. The Government are determined to fight for a better Health Service to the extent that we need to. I would like to reason for a better National Health Service. I believe that all reasonable people inside the service will work with us to attain the aim of a much improved Health Service —one which will work not only for patients, as the main title of our White Paper implied, but for care for the 1990s as its subtitle implied.

5.10 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises that the programme of fundamental changes to the structure of the National Health Service set out in the White Paper, Working for Patients (Cm. 555), will fragment the health service, undermine continuity of care and reduce patient choice; believes that competition on the basis of price will threaten quality of patient care and standards of professional training; rejects the White Paper's proposals for increased commercial use of National Health Service funds and National Health Service facilities for the treatment of private patients; notes that there was no reference in the Conservative manifesto to these sweeping changes in the National Health Service and that since their publication they have been rejected by every organisation representing medical opinion and by an overwhelming majority of public opinion; deplores the persistent failure of Her Majesty's Government to respond to the Griffiths Report on Community Care; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to postpone any major structural changes to the National Health Service until they can be submitted to the electorate in a General Election."

I shall begin by agreeing with one of the Secretary of State's observations from the Dispatch Box. I entirely agree that we must be aware of salesmen selling very expensive products. He does, of course, come to the Chamber to sell the most expensive White Paper in the life of the Government, and possibly the most expensive in the history of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. At the end of January, the Secretary of State answered a parliamentary question in which he said that the budget for the launch of the White Paper would be £1 million. A couple of weeks later, when replying to a parliamentary question from myself, he said that the outturn cost on the budget for the launch of the White Paper had been £1,400,000. I am advised that that sum comfortably exceeds the launch cost of the last Jeffrey Archer novel.

There are a couple of ironies about that expenditure. First, there is the obvious irony of a Secretary of State producing a White Paper that claims that it will achieve cost-effectiveness within the NHS, when he cannot keep the budget for the launch of that White Paper to within 40 per cent. of the budget. An even greater irony—the one obvious way to measure the outstanding waste of his largesse—is that he does not appear to have persuaded anyone to be taken in by it. If the Secretary of State was a Labour councillor and had spent so much money to so little purpose, he would have been in severe danger of being surcharged by the Prime Minister to get her money back.

Last week I drew attention to the fact that the White Paper had been rejected by just about every shade of medical opinion. I must say that on one point I was wrong, and I shall therefore make a correction to what I said. I indicated that the one medical body that was the exception to the rule was the Conservative Medical Society. At the weekend I was distressed to read in a Sunday newspaper that the Secretary of State

"came under criticism yesterday from members of the Conservative Medical Society, who expressed worries about the proposals in the White Paper. Mr. Frank Ellis, a consultant surgeon from Guy's thought the proposals for some hospitals to opt out would create a two-tier system. He said: 'Those who conform will be favoured. . .and those who won't will tend to be neglected'."

There we have it—even the Conservative Medical Society has gone overboard. I apologise to the House if I misled it last week.

I wish to draw attention to the way in which the White Paper has been rejected not only by the people who work in the NHS, but by the public who depend on the NHS. There is no better demonstration of the way in which the public have demonstrated their rejection of the White Paper than by the presence on the Benches behind me of my new hon. Friend the Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), whose spectacular victory last week was not just a remarkable victory for the Labour party, but a victory for the National Health Service. I take some satisfaction in that I was able to make my modest contribution to my hon. Friend's election. However, the 36 hours that I spent in the Vale of Glamorgan were nothing like as influential in winning votes for my hon. Friend as the three hours that the Secretary of State spent.

Last Friday I heard the Secretary of State several times express regret on television and radio that he had reached agreement with the doctors over GPs' contracts only an hour after the polls had closed, which was too late to rescue his candidate in the Vale of Glamorgan. The voters in the Vale of Glamorgan, who switched to us, were not doing so because they were distresssed by the fine print of the GPs' contracts. There were not clusters of voters hanging about outside the polling booths just before closing time, delaying their decisions until they heard what concessions had been given on the minimum list size that would qualify for the basic practice allowance.

The Secretary of State deludes himself—although I suspect that he does not delude his Back Benchers—if he believes that that was the issue. The voters were sending a clear message to the House that they do not want to see a Health Service driven by commercial demand rather than medical needs.

The voters of Glamorgan are not alone in that view. All the evidence that we have acquired in the past three

[Mr. Robin Cook]

months from opinion polls, hon. Members' correspondence and public meetings gives a resounding thumbs down to the White Paper. I concede that there are members of the public who have supported the White Paper. I was interested to read a report in *The Scotsman* on Tuesday of a public meeting in Dumfries which overwhelmingly came out against the Government's White Paper. There was, however, one voice raised at the meeting in support of the White Paper's proposals; to the distress of the Secretary of State, that one voice was raised by the town's local undertaker.

The Secretary of State keeps telling us that his intention is that the NHS should be more responsive to its consumers. In the light of all that evidence of public opinion, I suggest that he should listen to what the consumers are trying to tell him.

I was interested that the Secretary of State spent yesterday in Geneva. I confess that I only made it to the Westminster Grand Committee Room, where I met a large number of organisations representing those same consumers. There were more than 50 representatives of more than 20 organisations. Twenty of those organisations completed a questionnaire as part of the consultation. All were organisations representing particular groups of patients and users of the NHS, such as RADAR—the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, the Family Planning Association, the National Federation of the Blind of the United Kingdom and the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital. The answers of those 20 organisations revealed an overwhelming and profound anxiety about the White Paper's proposals. When we asked them if they believed that budgets for GPs would make them more cost-effective without affecting patient care, five of the 20 disagreed, 14 strongly disagreed and one did not know. When we asked them whether hospitals should opt for self-governing status, I concede that one out of 20 agreed. However, three disagreed and 15 strongly disagreed.

I admit that it was not a representative gathering. It was a gathering that differed from any random sampling of the public in that it consisted solely of people who were well informed about the Health Service and who had given years of service to voluntary organisations concerned with health. Their opinion was a resounding no to the White Paper.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): What will the hon. Gentleman say to the 1,000 consultants who will need to be sacked when the £43 million saved by competitive tendering under the Government is thrown away by the Labour party, if it ever gets the chance to put into practice the proposals published earlier this week?

Mr. Cook: I have met many consultants in the past three months. It has been an interesting experience for me and, I expect, for them, because there has been a degree of therapy when I have consoled them for the loss of the affection of their Government. I suspect that I have probably met 1,000 consultants during that time, but I have not met one who has expressed the least anxiety about losing his job under a future Labour Government. However, I have met many consultants who have expressed some surprise at the priorities of this Government who, as a result of their White Paper, proposed to increase the number of accountants in the Health Service by 1,000 while increasing the number of consultants by only 100, which gives a neat arithmetical guide to the priorities of the White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is trying to avoid the question asked of him by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). If the hon. Gentleman believes that the test of a Health Service policy is to ask 20 group representatives his chosen questions on that matter in the Grand Committee Room, will he ask those groups whether they would support his party's proposals to end competitive tendering in the Health Service, which would cost the Health Service £100 million? That is the sum that we have saved by the policy that the Labour party has always opposed.

Mr. Cook: We asked precisely that question in the consultative document that I issued last September. I assure the Secretary of State that the overwhelming majority of the responses that we have received have been supportive of the fact that if one wants to run a Health Service, one needs a health team that is motivated and committed to the Health Service. Such a health team would not consist simply of consultants and the Royal College of Nursing; it would also include ambulancemen, porters, cooks, domestics and everybody who keeps a hospital functioning.

On the Secretary of State's extraordinary point that the response from those 20 organisations reflected any loading in the question, let me put this challenge to him. I will happily recall all those 20 organisations and put to them questions on GPs' practice budgets and on hospital self-governing status in any terms in which the Secretary of State cares to frame them—I should be extremely surprised if the answers were any different.

I should add that the questions raised at the meeting yesterday were much more penetrating than those in the intervention of the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). The National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants asked reasonably, "What will happen to respite care when every bed in the hospital has to be paid for by contract?" Life is only just bearable for many carers because their GP colludes with them in arranging temporary admission to geriatric wards for their elderly relatives to give the carers a break. How many GPs will still do that if they have to pay for it out of their fixed budget? What price will be placed on the sanity and family life of carers in the new cost-effective Health Service?

The association called Asthma Care asked what would happen to the prescriptions of its members under the new limits on drugs budgets. The progressive management of asthma is now based on preventive medication. It is not based on waiting for acute attacks and then remedying them; it is based on prescribing before attacks happen. However, that preventive medicine can cost between £20 and £40 per month for cases of serious asthma. Because of the new drugs limits, how many GPs will feel obliged to revert to the old method of "wait and see" and wait for the acute attack——

Mr. Kenneth Clarke. None.

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State assures us that there will be none, but he has been much less robust and blunt

in his explanation of the drugs budgets to the House and to the public than he has been in his explanation to doctors of how they must buckle-to under the new GPs' contract.

The Secretary of State would have us believe that the drugs budget is not firm and fixed but that it is elastic and will bend and give. However, I refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to pragraph 7.16 of the White Paper, which is explicit in stating:

"Each year the provision made for FPS drug costs in the Parliamentary Estimates will be divided into separate firm budgets among the 14 health Regions . . . RHAs and FPCs will be expected to work to the budget they have been given."

I do not deny that the Secretary of State is technically correct. Yes, those authorities can exceed their budget, but only if they meet the extra cost by cutting it out of other expenditure on patient care. That is freedom, but it is the freedom to freeze expenditure on prescriptions and to cut expenditure on other services.

It is dishonest to pretend that that freedom is anything other than cash limits by any other name—*[Interruption.]* That is perfectly true, because it is in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own White Paper. It is also true that it is disingenuous of the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends to complain that patient organisations have been misled when they reasonably argue their well-informed anxieties about that paragraph——

Mr. Clarke: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for intervening twice when at first I did not intend to intervene as all, but his speech is solely designed to raise fears among all the groups that he is talking about. If the hon. Gentleman is quoting the White Paper about the effect on GPs, will he quote from the relevant part, paragraph 7.19, which states:

"Where a GP practice exceeds its indicative budget, the FPC's first recourse will be to offer advice and"—*[Interruption.]*—"where necessary, to bring a process of peer review to bear on the GPs' prescribing practices"?

That means that another doctor will give advice. Further steps will be taken only if there is no clinical reason for prescribing excessive quantities of drugs.

The hon. Gentleman's description of the White Paper is designed to instil fears into asthma sufferers or whichever group he is talking to. Does he really think that that is rising to the challenge of the events in the National Health Service, to which he should rise if he is serious about its future?

Mr. Cook: The question that I asked was not of my devising. It was brought to me by those asthma sufferers who had looked at the White Paper and felt anxiety.

Is the Secretary of State willing to say now that he will withdraw the clear and explicit statement in paragraph 7.16 and say that there will not be firm budgets in the regional health authorities, that the regional health authorities will not be expected to work to such a budget, and that he will compensate them if they exceed that budget—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman cannot claim that those questions are irrelevant. If GPs are to remain free to exceed their indicative budgets, will the Secretary of State advise the Southwark and Lambeth family practitioner committee——

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because I am addressing my question to the Secretary of State. We are entitled to know whether we are dealing with a fixed budget. Is it a cash limit or, as the Secretary of State would have us believe, something that can be ignored?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The patient will look to his GP for his prescription. It is clear in the White Paper that no patient need fear that his doctor will refuse to give him the medicine he requires. No doctor will be driven into bad clinical practice. Regional health authorities do work to cash limits now for the hospital service and they will work to cash limits. The regional health authorities' cash limits will not——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: No, I am not taking——

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Two Members of the House cannot be on their feet at the same time. I call Mr. Cook.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I am on my feet—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In my experience, when an hon. Gentleman has the courtesy to give way, he cannot then revoke his giving way, decide that he does not like what is being said and leap in to try to take half my answer which he will then no doubt use out of context in the way that he has just used those quotations from the White Paper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We had better get on with the debate. I call Mr. Cook.

Mr. Cook: Now we have it absolutely clear. It could not be clearer. The Secretary of State has just said that regional health authorities are, so far, under cash limits for hospital expenditure and that they will now be under cash limits for drug expenditure as well. We now have that clearly and firmly on the record. Those who are concerned about people with high prescription costs have every right to be concerned and to bring their anxieties to the House.

Mr. Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I have given way three times to the Secretary of State, and I shall now proceed with my speech.

I shall turn to those hospital sectors to which the Secretary of State has just referred.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it right for the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), having given way, then to stand up because he does not want my right hon. and learned Friend to complete his answer which the public want to hear?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that a large number of hon. Members wish to participate in this debate. Let us get on with it.

Mr. Cook: I am mindful of your observations, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Secretary of State was good enough to say that a large number of hospitals had expressed an interest in opting out——*[Interruption.]* Will my hon. Friends allow

[Mr. Cook]

me to proceed? *[Interruption.]* On the contrary, I have succeeded in doing exactly that which I am accused of not being able to do. I have been through the list that contains a number of reputable trade journals and health service journals. It is an interesting list. There are hospitals which are not in the list of those which have submitted an interest in opting out.

There are currently six hospitals in the resource management initiative which, the House will recall, was to have been the means through which hospitals would acquire the information to price a contract and the key to unlock the door to opting out. Of those six hospitals in the resource management initiative, five wrote to the Secretary of State saying that they had resolved not to express an interest in opting out. They all went into the resource management initiative because they were interested in better financial management. They all welcome, as did those consultants who have worked in the resource management initiative, the opportunity to manage their resources. However, they never entered into it on the basis that it would be paving the way to opt out. There is not a hope——

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The Secretary of State addressed the House for 52 minutes and he has already intervened three times in the 20 minutes of my speech. Of course, I shall as a matter of courtesy give way to him again on this occasion, but I would like to point out that other hon. Members have rights in this House.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman repeated something which he has said before about the letter sent by five of the hospitals in the RMI that were never, particularly, candidates for self-governing—*[Interruption.]* They were never special ones. The hon. Gentleman said that five of them had indicated that they were definitely not candidates.

I have a letter from Mr. Meecham, a consultant to the Wirral health authority at Arrowe Park hospital which was written to me after the hon. Gentleman first made that rather startling assertion. I shall read the relevant part about the statement that the hon. Gentleman made and which he has just repeated. It says:

"I certainly did not feel that any part of our letter made a judgement about self-government and would not have wished it to do so. I was amazed and dismayed therefore when a great deal of the coverage in the national press talked of the hospitals involved rejecting self-government or refusing to opt out. I certainly had not intended any such interpretation to be made. I had regarded our letter as a plea for taking it one step at a time rather than being rushed along without assessment of pilot projects being taken into account. Quite how the national press made the interpretation that they made, I do not understand."

The national press interpreted it in that way because the hon. Gentleman did. Arrowe Park will, in due course, decide whether it wants to be self-governing, as will the other five hospitals. It is totally untrue for the hon. Gentleman to say that those hospitals have rejected self-government and untrue for him to repeat it today.

Mr. Cook: It would not be magnaminous of me not to recognise such a useful intervention. I assure the Secretary of State that if he wishes to read any more such letters during my speech, I shall cheerfully give way to him.

The Secretary of State's difficulty is that he is left with other hospitals in which there is barely a hope that they will have the adequate pricing information to opt out by April 1991, despite the haste with which the Department is cobbling together a software package that cuts corners. I note that the Secretary of State's director of finance information engagingly described that as a "quick and dirty approach" to the problem.

One reason that I am confident that some of the hospitals in the list will not be ready for opt-out in 1991 is that three of them have yet to be built and a number of the others are scheduled to be closed before 1991, including Much Wenlock hospital. I do not wish to disparage Much Wenlock hospital, which I am sure in its own way is a centre of excellence. However, it is plainly not one of the 300 major acute hospitals that we were originally told were prime candidates for opt-out. The dragooning of Much Wenlock cottage hospital into the list of hospitals for opt-out reveals a certain desperation.

The most telling demonstration of the fact that the Government are having difficulty in selling the concept is the frequency with which management has been obliged to express interest in flat defiance of the medical staff. I mentioned that five out of six hospitals in the RMI had decided to express no interest. The sixth, Guy's hospital, has expressed interest. Last night, the consultants at Guy's were so fed up with having Panama ballots by the management board, that they called in the Electoral Reform Society, which, in a ballot, discovered that two out of three consultants regretted that Guy's had not joined the other five hospitals in their letter to the Secretary of State.

Even more startling is the case of Leicester, where 140 consultants gathered and voted unanimously against opt-out. Subsequently, at a closed meeting of the management board, it was decided to nominate Leicester

Why is medical opinion so overwhelming in rejecting the concept? What is it that worries the profession? First, they are worried that it will fragment the Health Service. The proposal in the White Paper is written by people who see what happens to the patient in hospital as an isolated episode, with no connection to what has gone before or after. A simple model is one in which the patient collects his or her travel voucher from the local district general manager; the patient disappears to travel the long distance to the hospital in which the contract has been chosen by the district general manager, not by the patient; the patient may never before have been diagnosed; there may be no commitment to community services in the area from which the patient comes; the patient may have no prospect of returning as an out-patient; and there is no access to the medical records of the patient.

It is bizarre that the Secretary of State should describe such a concept as one that treats patients as people. The consultants have not been taken in by the idea that extra money will follow any extra patients attracted. They have been sharper in seeing through that fraud than the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Back-Bench colleagues. The structure proposed cannot produce extra funds for the hospital sector because there is no proposal to provide extra funds for it. The cheerful notion that everyone's hospital can receive more money by opting out rests on a simple delusion. As the consultants at Guy's hospital in their letter to *The Independent* the other day observed:

"The only way we can get more money for Guy's is by concentrating on what is profitable, not what is needful."

Mr. Ashton: Is it not a fact that if a hospital chooses to opt out, it will have to take on a huge debt to buy its own buildings and equipment from the Government? In many instances, it will only be able to service that through extra fund-raising, sponsorship or selling off land.

Mr. Cook: My hon. Friend understates his case. The truth is that not only hospitals which opt out will be faced with these charges. Every hospital in the health sector will be faced with them. They will be faced with a payment on capital charges, not just for rent for the roof over their heads but for every piece of equipment in the building worth more than £1,000. Heaven knows what additional costs that will entail by way of administration of the immense, ponderous effort of gathering together such a mammoth inventory, merely to enable Conservative Members to know where every piece of equipment worth £1,000 is located.

To return to the argument about whether money will follow the patient: even to succeed in selling treatments that are profitable rather than needful, these hospitals will have to compete against each other merely to stand still. The fundamental dishonesty in the White Paper is that it continually presents competition as resulting in an increase in quality—because the hospitals compete on quality—when the White Paper is really written with the intention of lowering the cost to the NHS by obliging these hospitals to compete not on quality but on price. And the first victim of competition on price will be the quality of patient care.

Anyone who doubts this has only to remember that the contracts will be awarded by health authorities desperately juggling to make ends meet now. On Tuesday, the National Association of Health Authorities issued a statement pointing out the difficulty that it was having coping with 8 per cent. inflation on a budget based on a forecast of 5 per cent. It now calculates——

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall happily give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. His interventions—he has made one in every speech that I have made in this Parliament—are always worth hearing.

The National Association of Health Authorities now estimates that the cumulative under-funding of the hospital sector in the lifetime of this Government exceeds £3 billion. That is why hospitals up and down the country are running out of money to treat their patients.

Mr. Favell: I greatly resent the hon. Gentleman saying that hospitals that give good value for money do not give good service. Stepping Hill hospital in Stockport has twice been top of the value-for-money league in the north-west, and it gives an excellent service.

Mr. Cook: I am terribly sorry if I caused the hon. Gentleman offence; I shall make a point of not giving way to him next time.

There are undoubtedly many excellent hospitals which provide value for money, such as the one to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Why on earth is it necessary, then, to turn the whole system upside down to tackle the problem of under-funding——

Mr. Hind *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has already raised a point in my speech, and once is enough for anyone, apart from the Secretary of State.

The consequence of this under-funding was perfectly illustrated only yesterday in a parliamentary answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). It confirmed that, of the 11 body scanners in operation in the Trent region, seven had to be paid for by public appeal. That is the type of Health Service to which we have been reduced—the Health Service of the collecting can, a Health Service in which the harsh reality is that large numbers of health authorities end each year broke. In such circumstances, they will have no choice but to award their contracts on the basis of where they can obtain the cheapest ones.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Gentleman has raised a valid point. One of the difficulties at present is that, since there is an efficiency trap, beds and wards are closed at the end of the year because hospitals run out of money. Under the proposals in the White Paper, which will make the money travel with the patient, does he agree that precisely the opposite will obtain and hospitals will be given a financial incentive to open the 20 per cent. of NHS beds that are closed for stupid economic reasons?

Mr. Cook: I must try again, perhaps a shade more slowly. There can be no removal of the problem of under-funding at the end of the financial year, because no more finance is proposed for the kitty. Even if the hon. Gentleman is correct that some hospitals will attract more money for the patient—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Let us assume for a moment the hypothesis proposed by Conservative Members, in which these hospitals will try to undercut each other and will therefore receive no extra money. The corollary of the hon. Gentleman's argument is that other hospitals will face the problems of bed and ward closures even earlier in the year because they do not have the necessary resources.

The most spectacular, technicolour failure of the White Paper was also the most conspicuous omission from the Secretary of State's speech. The right hon. and learned Gentleman addressed the House for 52 minutes in his own speech and for seven during mine without once alluding to the words "community care". The White Paper manages to run to more than 100 pages on the NHS without a single proposal for better patient care in the community. That is a failure that fully matches the deplorable failure of the Government to respond to the Griffiths report one year and two months after its publication. If the Secretary of State wishes to tell us that we must now wait for another White Paper, I shall cheerfully give way to him for the fifth time so that he can name the date when the Government will give their response to the report.—That has managed to silence even this Secretary of State.

Every now and again we see the consequences of this neglect. Last night I sat in the Library and read yesterday's report by the British Geriatrics Society on the abuse of elderly people. It makes harrowing reading. It contains case histories of frail, elderly people, battered and bruised in body and emotions, and often abused by close caring relatives who have been driven to distraction by the strain of constant attendance without break, sleep or help.

I was particularly moved by the case of a daughter who gave up her flat to move in with her mother and sleep on her sofa. The daughter was finally found trying to strangle

[Mr. Cook]

her mother with a towel after a day in which, in 24 hours, she had been called 17 times to lift her mother on and off the commode.

This type of condition is the major challenge facing the health and social services at the end of this century. We must provide care and nursing for the growing number who find themselves in conditions that cannot be cured but for whom appropriate services and support from the Health Service can make the difference between pain, squalor and isolation on the one hand, and comfort, dignity and a life of interest on the other. The White Paper is wholly silent on how we should assist these people.

Only one help is offered for the health care of the elderly —the tax relief for private medical cover. No one could read the report by the British Geriatrics Society and still believe that this proposal is relevant to a single one of the case histories I have mentioned. It is a proposal as fatuous in its irrelevance to the real health needs of the elderly as it is central to the political dogma of Conservative Members.

Here we come to the real threat posed by the White Paper. It would be a mistake to judge it as no more than a ragbag of wrong-headed impractical proposals, full of glaring omissions. There is a thread that holds it together. To do the Secretary of State justice, he has a strategy. His strategic objective is to destabilise the National Health Service and replace it with a commercial one. It is a strategy that is not difficult to spot. It keeps breaking to the surface all the way through the White Paper. It breaks through in the suggestion that opt-out hospitals should use NHS facilities for private patients, in the suggestion that general practitioners should use NHS money to buy private treatment for their patients and in the obligation on health authorities to give equal preference to private hospitals in awarding contracts for medical treatment.

We are at the start of a long journey. We can already see where we will end up—with market medicine as it is practised across the Atlantic, where 30 million Americans have no medical cover, where health means organisations are put on the second floor to discourage expensive, disabled people from enrolling, and where patients die in casualty rooms while the accountant is finding out who will pay for them.

If that does not move Conservative Members, let me warn them about what happens to well-heeled people like the people whom they represent. American women are twice as likely to have their wombs removed as British women. American men are two and a half times more likely to have their prostate rebored as are British men, and three times more likely to have their gall bladders removed. That is not because they have any greater need for those operations but because the people who sell the operations believe in what they sell. When a doctor examines a patient, he comes to the conclusion, "Your gall bladder is worth more to me than it is to you." Market medicine gives the worst of both worlds. It denies the poor and the unhealthy the treatment that they need, and it cons the healthy and the wealthy into treatment that they do not need.

We are in danger of losing a Health Service that is motivated by dedication and replacing it with one that is driven by financial targets. We have had plenty of occasions recently to note the danger of what we will lose and how important it is. We have been able to note it in the succession of tragic events with major loss of life during the past 18 months. Hillsborough is the latest in that succession. We have had Piper Alpha, Lockerbie and Clapham. On every one of those occasions it has been the ambulancemen, the casualty departments, and the nurses of the National Health Service who have turned out to handle the emergency. It is to them that we turn on such occasions.

The Prime Minister has been assiduous in visiting each disaster. On every occasion she has been good enough to say how wonderful the emergency services have been, as they were, but they are just as wonderful between disasters on every other day of the year when they do not provide the opportunity for a photo call. If those services are to be there when they are needed, we have to sustain them all the year round. We must give them the resources that they need to do the job. We must heed the advice that they offer on the future of the service. Above all, we must give them the commitment that we believe in the service that they provide. It is because right hon. and hon. Members on the Government side do not believe in that service that we will vote against them tonight.

5.52 pm

Sir Gerard Vaughan (Reading, East): Because so many hon. Members wish to speak, I shall speak only briefly. There was a great deal of laughter, particularly from the Opposition Benches, during the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). I found what he was saying distressing; and it was increasingly distressing as he went on. I worked for the whole of my life in the National Health Service until I came to the House. *[Interruption.]* I will not indulge in the sort of remarks that have just been made.

What troubled and distressed me, and should distress the whole House, was the constant attempt of the hon. Member for Livingston to undermine people's faith in the Health Service and to create anxiety among people who do not understand what is happening and alarm in places where it should not exist. I would have expected from the spokesman for the Opposition a much more serious look at what the Secretary of State has recommended.

May I remind hon. Members that the National Health Service was started on an all-party basis? Today the Opposition are attempting to undermine the service. *[Interruption.]* Yes. They are a backward-looking, unserious group of people who are not taking proper account of what has been proposed by the Secretary of State.

The hon. Member for Livingston quoted the Conservative Medical Society. I was at the meeting to which he referred. What he said was a total travesty of what happened. My right hon. and learned Friend will agree. I am an honorary consultant at Guy's; what the hon. Gentleman said about attitudes within Guy's was also a complete travesty of what is happening in the hospital. When he goes round hospitals I wonder whom he talks to. Is it only his union chums, who wish to be activists within the Health Service? They are not the people who talk to me.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is disputing whom my hon. Friend speaks for. Do you think that in the course of his remarks he will make a disclosure

of his interests which, according to the Register of Members' Interests, include the directorship of Private Medical Centres plc and the joint chairmanship of Spahealth Ltd.? Do you think that in his trip down memory lane the hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that he has those relevant interests which bear directly on the debate?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The House knows that it is customary for hon. Members to declare their interests during debates.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I have nothing to say. They would not be in the Register of Members' Interests if I was worried about them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Sedentary interventions prolong debate and waste valuable time.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): on a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman also has strong connections with the British pharmaceutical industry. Will he declare those interests before proceeding with his speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We had better let the hon. Gentleman get on with the speech.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I said at the start, I propose to speak briefly. I wish to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on what he is proposing for the National Health Service. He is putting forward his proposals with great courage and determination. A great many doctors and nurses have been talking to me and telephoning me to tell me how much they support my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals.

Some doctors have been telephoning me not to criticise what my right hon. Friend has proposed but to ask what it all means. That is where part of the problem lies. The Secretary of State is putting forward very complicated proposals that are difficult to understand. They need much explanation. Opposition Members find it easy to use them to misrepresent people's attitudes.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): No doubt my hon. Friend will consider the question of resources. Will he draw attention to the £2 billion to £3 billion more that is going into the Health Service in the current year? *[Interruption.]* The Labour party is wearing its heart on its sleeve about resources—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are too many speeches going on.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Labour council in Ealing put up the rates on Ealing hospital by £500,000 two years ago and that it is putting them up by another £500,000 this year? Labour does not care.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is talking about evolution. Opposition Members do not seem to realise that, as the proposals in the White Paper are put into effect, so the situation will change.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does the hon. Gentleman realise that some Scottish Members have been inundated with letters about the ending of the care attendance schemes in September? Those schemes have given carers the respite that they need to enable them to continue caring for their mums and dads and sons and daughters at home rather than have them go into hospital, yet the Government are deaf and dumb in the matter. They have not come to the aid of those carers or of the patients that they look after. There has been no emphasis on community care. I do not like to criticise hon. Members who are sincere, but they must look at what we are seeing. I am being sincere when I say that the Government are condemning many carers who cannot take any more. Please take that into consideration.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: I know in whose hands the NHS is safest—my right hon. and learned Friend's.

My right hon. and learned Friend is right when he says that the introduction of more information and of medical and clinical audits will change the situation. For the first time, people will begin to know where the money is being spent and where there are places for the treatment of their patients.

Recently, in my constituency, I had the problem of a lady who required a hip operation and was kept awake every night in pain. The waiting list in our locality for that operation is two and a half years. When I asked the health authority to inquire where else she could go it could not provide that information. It did not have the resources to find out where she might go. I had to phone round and find a hospital where she could be admitted virtually immediately. That should not be done by a Member for Parliament; it should be done as a matter of course by the local health authority, and that will be possible when the information comes through in the way that my right hon. and learned Friend has proposed.

No doctor would object to a medical audit. It is agreed on all sides that they would be of benefit to us. It is regarded in the same way as a consultant regards a second opinion. If it agrees with him, it strengthens his hand, and, if it disagrees with him, he is interested to know why somebody thinks the job could be done better in a different way.

I shall not go on any further. I know that Opposition Members will be pleased because they do not want to hear too much from someone who has been working in the field. Anyone who goes round the hospitals, as I do, will hear people complaining about the frustration created by delays and the waste under the present system.

My right hon. and learned Friend was right to remind us of what is going on overseas. That is relevant because every other major country is facing the same sort of problems that we in Britain face. Unless we face up to that, we shall not have the services or the reduced waiting lists that we wish. Therefore, I strongly support what my right hon. and learned Friend is trying to do in this difficult area.

6.2 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that you and hon. Members will bear with me while I make my maiden speech in the course of this important debate. I should like to start by thanking you and all hon. Members for the wonderful welcome that I was given on Tuesday when I took my seat and also to thank hon. Members on both sides of the House for the individual welcomes that I have received. I hope that the warmth that has been shown towards me will continue for many years.

[Mr. John P. Smith]

It is customary in a maiden speech to pay tribute to one's predecessor and, if possible, to avoid controversy. The first custom I am sure that I can meet without difficulty, but I am not so sure about the second custom, given the controversial nature of the debate. But I thought that a safe formula would be to refer to my predecessor's maiden speech in 1951. Unfortunately, it was controversial. Sir Raymond Gower referred not only to the burning issue in Wales of devolution, but to the unbalanced economy and the adverse effect that that was having on his constituency and south Wales.

Therefore, I went even further back, to the maiden speech of Dame Dorothy Rees. Surprise, surprise, I found that she discussed the crisis in housing, homelessness and the problem of eviction, a major issue at the time, and the unbalanced economy. I was going to go back even further until I was told that Lynn Ungoed Thomas was an expert on the NHS and its introduction, so I thought that it might be better to miss that as well.

It is a great privilege for me to pay tribute to Sir Raymond Gower. He commanded tremendous respect within his constituency for 38 years, not least my respect as I had the honour of standing against him at the last general election. During that time, he helped his constituents tremendously. He was definitely a consensus politician and most certainly a one-nation politician. That is why he gained so much respect.

The best tribute that I can pay to the man is to refer to an experience that I had in 1979 when I contested a local election and we had the general election at the same time. I was canvassing for myself when I knocked on the door of a family who referred to themselves as Labour supporters all their lives. They said that they would vote for me in the local election but for Sir Raymond in the general election. I asked why. Surprisingly, they did not say that it was because he had helped them on a particular issue or that he was a good constituency Member of Parliament. Instead they said, "He is a friend of the family." For constituents to refer to their Member of Parliament as a friend is a great tribute, and if I can live up to that I shall be very proud indeed.

My constituency is a beautiful one, as many hon. Members know, having been there in the past three or four weeks. It is made up of the industrial town of Barry, which is celebrating its centenary this year and comprises approximately 50 per cent. of the population, and the beautiful rural Vale of Glamorgan with its rolling green hills, lush farmland and one or two nice suburbs.

My constituency has done reasonably well. It enjoys a higher than average household income and wealth in Wales, and the majority of people there consider themselves middle class. That was why I was delighted to be elected by them last week.

I have no doubt that one of the major issues in that election—in fact, the major issue—was the NHS. The matter is simple. With few exceptions, one's level of income or social status do not matter. My constituents, and, I believe, the British public, recognise that private medicine cannot meet the nation's health needs. In particular, it cannot meet the health needs of the chronically sick, the disabled and the elderly. That message came across clearly during my campaign.

My constituents were not concerned just about the reform of the NHS. My constituency already has major long-standing health issues with which to deal. For example, my constituency does not have a major casualty unit and that is completely unacceptable. It is dangerous in two ways. First, people have to travel long distances to receive emergency treatment, and, secondly, should there be an emergency or accident in the home, mums will often wait until the following morning to go to the local part-time minor casualty unit, thinking that they are doing the best thing by not putting pressure on the Health Service. That can be dangerous, because the hours immediately after a knock, a scrape or an accident are important.

We do not have, and have not had for some time, an adequate ambulance service in the constituency. In the western Vale of Glamorgan, one ambulance serves the entire area between 6 pm and 10 pm and between 12 midnight and 8 am. If there is more than one emergency, it has to be decided to which one to send the ambulance, and I have pointed out the problem of long distances. It was heart-rending when, during the by-election campaign, I spoke to a local lady, Mrs. Margaret Taylor, who told me how she lay in the road in Llantwit Major town centre for 45 minutes awaiting the arrival of an ambulance following a road accident.

In addition, we are faced with the proposed closure of the children's orthopaedic unit in Rhydlafar hospital, which is on the border of my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) but which is used by my constituents. We are also faced with a proposal to shut the most popular hospital in the Vale of Glamorgan, Sully hospital, because clearly, in view of its location, it is a prime development site. It is a beautiful hospital and my constituents do not want it to be closed.

The proposed reforms in the White Paper were the icing on the cake. All the problems to which I have referred are problems of under-funding and none of them will be met by the proposals in the White Paper. Indeed, when I had the privilege of having a private meeting with general practitioners in the constituency, before making any reference to the proposals in the White Paper they made it clear that under-funding was the major problem facing the NHS.

It has been a privilege to have this opportunity to make a short and non-controversial speech in a most important debate. I wish to thank my hon. Friends for all the help that they gave me during the by-election campaign, and I extend special thanks to the Secretary of State for Health for the assistance that he gave me. I look forward to making far more controversial speeches in the future.

6.12 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): The hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), who has come to the House after a memorable by-election victory, has lived up to the traditions of the House in every way in his maiden speech. He spoke with great fluency and absolute sincerity. His speech highlighted local issues of great concern and he paid a most gracious tribute to his predecessor, Raymond Gower, who was a well-loved colleague of hon. Members in all parts of the House and

of the staff at all levels. I am not sure how long the hon. Gentleman will remain here, but we shall be eager to hear him again, perhaps in a more controversial mood.

Before dealing with the main issue of the debate, I must first declare my interest with a pharmaceutical company, as outlined in the Register.

What a contrast there was in the opening speeches. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on a reasonably argued and realistic speech about improving patient care. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), on the other hand, used his considerable skills to make some amusing cracks, which we enjoyed, some political points, but little else, apart from a moving section concerned with community care.

I imagine that hon. Members on both sides are waiting anxiously to hear the Government's response to the Griffiths report, which was published in the middle of March last year. It is important for the Government to declare their position soon on the important matters raised in that report.

The fundamental issue facing the nation is how to improve our highly cost-effective—at least compared with other systems of health care in other countries—National Health Service. The service can of course be improved, and must be made better able to meet the increasing needs of patients, needs which have been amplified by demographic factors and by the pressure of medical advance. More attention must be concentrated on prevention. We do not have a National Health Service so much as a national illness service. The more that we can move towards a genuine Health Service, by dealing with prevention, the better.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn) *rose—*

Sir Barney Hayhoe: I normally give way but I will not on this occasion. More than 90 minutes of the time available for the debate has already been used by the Front Bench speakers. Mr. Speaker has appealed for short speeches because so many hon. Members are anxious to take part.

The White Paper contains much that is good but, regrettably, too much that is questionable and ill-defined. Although the review arose from the funding crisis in the NHS of 1987-88, the White Paper says little, if anything, about money. To borrow a comment from a distinguished former Prime Minister, it is a menu without prices.

I am quick to welcome the increased funding that was announced by the Secretary of State this afternoon to help with some of the proposals in the White Paper, and I welcome the substantially increased resources for the NHS announced in the White Paper on public expenditure. But the White Paper that we are discussing is not only a menu without prices; it is a menu with attractive dishes, some without recipes and others untried and untested.

The White Paper is strong on objectives. Who can quarrel with seeking to improve consumer choice, with pressure to achieve higher standards and extended medical audits, with exerting market pressures to try to ensure the most effective use of resources, with more local control, whether in hospitals or elsewhere in the service, and with measures designed to use more effectively the taxpayers' money that is devoted to the NHS?

The White Paper is, however, weak on detail. The hon. Member for Livingston referred to the serious and notable omission of anything about community care. As I said, more must come from the Government soon for that area. The White Paper is a brilliant piece of Civil Service drafting because it is capable of sharply differing interpretations by those who read it.

True to form, the Opposition parties have gone over the top with their criticisms and forecasts of doom and disaster, never recognising—they have not said a word about this today—that if their economic policies had been pursued, the resources to provide improved health care, better education and improved social security benefits would not have been available. One must always remember that we are able to devote more resources to these services because of the success of our economic policies.

Not surprisingly, the response of the British Medical Association, the doctors' trade union, was shrill. However, the considered criticisms made by the Joint Consultants Committee deserve careful consideration. The JCC speaks on behalf of the royal colleges and its views must be taken carefully into account by the Ministers concerned. The consultants' co-operation is of the highest importance in any change within or development of the Health Service. The Government's decision to reject the recommendation in the doctors' and dentists' pay review body award of £1,000 extra for consultants was a perverse and curious way of seeking those consultants' co-operation with the reforms that lay ahead.

The White Paper is capable of differing interpretations. The subject of drug budgets was referred to a few minutes ago in a slightly acrimonious exchange. The White Paper makes it clear that drug budgets for GPs and for practices are indicative. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has emphasised time and time again that no patient will be denied required medication because of lack of money. However, there is a basic inconsistency between that clear statement and the firm drug budgets that will be imposed on regions and on family practitioner committees.

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Barney Hayhoe: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister shakes his head, but I have yet to see spelt out any assurance to the contrary. I shall be very pleased if that is given. It appears that, because mention has been made of firm budgets at the regional level—my right hon. and learned Friend himself used the phrase "cash-limited"—those outside the House have interpreted that as overriding my right hon. and learned Friend's comments about indicative budgets and there being no possibility of a patient suffering as a result of them.

Mr. Mellor *rose——*

Sir Barney Hayhoe: Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend will allow me to finish making this point.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State stresses, quite rightly, the vital point that general practitioners will not run out of money for their patients' prescriptions and that there is no question of their scrips bouncing when they are presented at the chemist, as would a cheque if no resources were available to meet it. Nevertheless the dilemma remains, and it would be helpful if it could be resolved.

I remember well that when I served in the Treasury and in the Department of Health and Social Security, the

[Sir Barney Hayhoe]

Treasury was always seeking to cash-limit the drug budget. In seeking to control public expenditure, obviously it would do so. However, the reference in the White Paper to firm drug budgets for the Health Service as a whole and at the regional level owes nothing to the Department of Health but I suspect was inserted by the Treasury representative. I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend has repeatedly stressed the importance of general practitioners remaining unconstrained by cash limits. I am happy to leave it at that.

Mr. Mellor *rose*——

Sir Barney Hayhoe: The same rule must apply to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister as to others. He will have an opportunity to respond when he winds up.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on reaching agreement on a contract for GPs. This matter should not have been muddled up with the White Paper anyway. I shall not apportion blame, but it is a pity that the contract could not have been got out of the way before publication of the White Paper. It is splendid that agreement has now been reached. I only hope that, when the members of the BMA meet in larger numbers, they will not disown their negotiators. That would be very serious and would damage the prospect of making real progress in improving health care in this country.

My right hon. and learned Friend made reference to another dilemma when he spoke about the speed at which the proposals could be implemented. The White Paper is clearly unrealistic in its apparent time scales. I am glad that the words now being used by Ministers appear to qualify these timings. Professor Alan Williams of the centre for health economics at York university, in commenting on the proposals for improving the efficiency of the NHS, stated that they

"have much to commend them. But they are thrown together with all sorts of untried ideas, and set for implementation in a recklessly short time span, mostly without pilot testing, experimentation or evaluation. Pursued in a more deliberative and selective manner, with time for the collection of evidence and mature reflection, they could do the NHS a lot of good. Pursued with such haste, in this authoritarian and dictatorial manner, it just seems irresponsible."

My right hon. and learned Friend confirms that pilot projects and controlled experiments are not buzz words either at Richmond house or at No. 10 Downing street —but perhaps staged implementation or realistic programmes will be adopted. They are essential for success. Steady progress and development are better than a wild rush to upheaval—and perhaps to electoral disaster.

I am glad that the White Paper contains none of the wilder radical proposals for overturning the present, largely tax-funded, basis of a Health Service that is available to all and free at the point of delivery.

I have sought to make it clear that I am not all that enamoured by the White Paper. Parts of it could certainly have been much better, but it could have been much worse. At least it is clear that its desirable objectives provide a basis for sensible and reasonable development and for discussion between Ministers, civil servants and representatives of the professions. I am prepared to give my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the benefit of the doubt—perhaps I should say of many doubts—as I believe that we both want a better National Health Service providing better patient care. With good will, that objective can command general support.

6.27 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): There has been attack, counter-attack, accusation following accusation, words spoken, written and shouted about the National Health Service review and its implications, which has led to the burying of the reasons for that review in the first place. Not long ago, the House was in the throes of a debate about the Health Service crisis in response to the almost nightly scenes of young children, the elderly, and other seriously ill and chronically sick patients being refused admission to our hospitals and to the life-saving treatment that they desperately needed. All that was the result of a lack of beds and resources. We all agree that that situation was brought about by systematic and chronic underfunding. A consequence of those debates and of the general furore over the crisis in the hospital services was that the Prime Minister announced a thorough and extensive review of NHS resources.

One year later, we find not only a White Paper full of holes and omissions that are not filled by the working papers, but one that fails to examine in any detail the financing and funding of the country's Health Service. There is no commitment to inject new resources; merely a tinkering at the edges with the old by transferring them from one area to another, including in and out of the private sector, in the hope that this will in some way cut costs while improving services. This purely a pipe dream.

The Health Service needs more hard and ready cash. Just this week, the National Association of Health Authorities has provided evidence that the review completely ignores. Its report shows an underfunding in England alone of £490 million this year with cumulative underfunding of £3 billion. Those figures show that the pressures on the National Health Service are continuing at an alarming rate and are likely to do so in the foreseeable future—something of which those who work in and those who use the service are very well aware.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the lack of any commitment to the adequate funding of these services is clear from the Government's White Paper. This has led patients and professionals to believe that the review was designed not to improve care but to cut costs.

Mr. Philip Hunt of the National Association of Health Authorities, which is by no means a blanket critic of the review, is reported to have said:

"It is very vital for the government to recognise and understand this history of financial pressures on health authorities if the reforms proposed by the white paper are to be successful or for the benefit of patients."

There has been much publicity over the opposition by doctors to the Government White Paper. I know that many of my hon. Friends have received very many letters and have been besieged by general practitioners and hospital doctors all expressing their concerns. But perhaps Dr. F. J. Parkinson of Redditch, who is not at all impressed by the Government's commitment to funding, is the best example. In a letter to the newspaper *Pulse* on 6 May this year, he wrote:

"I believe that the NHS review is a smokescreen for the underlying problem with the NHS. As the Commons Select Committee so rightly stated, the service is grossly underfunded. The proposals do nothing to tackle this problem and offer little that will benefit ordinary patients."

The writer describes himself as a member of the Conservative Medical Society. He continues:

"As a Conservative I feel very ashamed at the manner in which the review has been presented—the white paper is a thoroughly bad document. The schemes outlined are vague, untried and really do not seem likely to benefit patients."

It is not very often that I find myself in agreement with a Conservative gentleman, but in this case I am in complete agreement.

My own stand on the matter of resources for the NHS has never been in doubt. I have often said, and said in the House, that how much a country can afford to pay for its health service is a matter of political will. We can afford a lot more than we are paying now and I would like to see a minimum of 2 per cent. increase over and above the NHS pay and price inflator on a long-term plan. I would like to see pay awards fully funded and proper provision made for any reforms or projects that the Government introduce. For instance, I would have no hesitation in committing Social and Liberal Democrats to fully funding the restructuring of the nurses' profession along the lines of Project 2000.

While on the subject of funding, I want to make it clear that Social and Liberal Democrats continue to oppose and would like to see abolished the recent tax relief to the elderly for private health insurance. We would also like to see the charges for eye tests and teeth checks abolished immediately and, in the long term, all such charges dispensed with.

One of the biggest failures of the White Paper is the total lack of costing of any of the proposals. This is very odd coming from a Government which prides itself on the use of marketplace methods. It is even more strange to watch the full-blown attempts to sell the product when the Government have no idea of the cost of the product, whether there is a market for it or, worse still, if the product is capable of working at all. It is even more disconcerting when I realise that it is my and other taxpayers' money that is paying for this folly.

I cannot understand why the Government did not attempt to test this product first. Is the Prime Minister concerned that pilot projects may show too many faults in the design, or is it due to sheer arrogance that pilot schemes have not been introduced? Worse still—I hesitate to make such a suggestion—is it that the proposals are all part and parcel of the Prime Minister's proclaimed aim to roll back the state, and will it therefore be implemented whatever the cost, in both financial and human terms?

Ministers justify these proposals with claims that they will improve patient choice and patient care. I agree that it may be easier for patients to change doctors but, with doctors rushing to increase their list sizes and incentives given to encourage them to form large group practices, how much choice will the average patient have? How many doctors will be within easy reach? How many of them will be women? There are patients who prefer to see a women doctor but, with the pressures to increase list sizes, many women will find it difficult to run or even join a practice, as has been mentioned already. In rural areas—this was referred to in the debate the other night—where doctors are few and far between, choice is already limited and will remain so.

In 1983, the Social Services Committee recommended an optimum list size of 1,700. Will the Minister tell me what has changed since that time? Social and Liberal Democrats believe that doctors need to spend time with their patients, and we would seek to lower the list size at present proposed.

Primary health teams with greater involvement for district and practice nurses, midwives and health visitors would free the doctor for more active diagnostic and preventive medicine and create a real community health service—a concept obviously alien to the authors of the present proposals.

The White Paper makes little provision for particular groups, such as the elderly, many of whom rely on community-based health services. Where is the guarantee of choice and improved care for them? In many respects the proposals may lead to a reduction in services as a result of hospitals becoming self-governing trusts.

These proposals will diminish health care in the hospital catchment area. Core services are imprecise and the term "local area" is not defined, making it very difficult to know whether people will have access to a full range of services within their own area. As the market and profit play a vital part in the Government's view of the Health Service, it is doubtful whether the present range of services will stay intact. This is even more doubtful when it comes to resource-draining services such as geriatric and long-stay care.

The White Paper takes very little account of discharge procedures, after-care services, ambulance and transport services and many other aspects of patient care.

Major hospitals opting to become self-governing trusts will have a knock-on effect on other hospitals and services. The problems of lack of funding, lack of staff and poor pay will be shifted round the country, which will merely exacerbate them. Already many hospitals are suffering not only from a shortage of nursing staff but from shortages in all staff groups. The private sector, as well as other industries, contribute to this shortage. Obviously, hospitals not restricted by national pay agreements will attract the most qualified staff, making it very difficult for other hospitals in the same area or adjoining areas to attract the necessary personnel.

I know that the university medical schools are very concerned about how this proposal will affect their interrelations and responsibilities. They, of course, play a very important part in teaching, training and research. Centres of excellence will destroy the aim of universal provision of health care and the concept of a community-based comprehensive Health Service.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that the creation of centres of excellence will destroy universal provision. Surely the whole idea of such centres—whether they specialise in health care, science, education or any other subject—is to set examples for others, and a centre of excellence in the Health Service will provide such an example. It will lift the quality of provision, and should not be criticised.

Mr. Fearn: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not think that I was criticising. Centres of excellence already exist which are doing a good job. I feel, however, that my point is a good one.

The Government are embarking on a course that has not been navigated. Ray Robinson of the King's Fund Institute, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, has said:

"Self governing hospitals will represent an untried form of organisation operating within an untested market environment."

[Mr. Fearn]

He continues:

"The white paper is about implementation not experimentation."

The review is certainly not about patients and health care. It is about management systems, accounting and information systems, and virtually nothing else. It ignores community care and the effects that the proposals will have on such services. Social and Liberal Democrats believe that community care should be a major priority for any Government, and we would introduce proposals along the lines of those recommended by Griffiths—which we consider solid and strong—with a commitment to provide adequate funds.

Where in the proposals is the "broad front" approach that Social and Liberal Democrats believe is so necessary for good health promotion? Where does it mention accident prevention, occupational health, social policy and environmental pollution, among other issues? Where does it discuss additional taxes on industries whose products lead to ill health?

Where is the patients' charter—mentioned in three speeches so far—to show that the Government really have the patients' interests at heart? We should like to see a guarantee of patients' rights, including the right to full information about their own medical condition and the options for treatment, the right to hospital treatment within a specified period and the right of access to a comprehensive complaints procedure. Where are the proposals to allow a patient to choose one of the alternative disciplines in medicine and treatment? Where is the choice of care for pregnant women? The White Paper virtually ignores maternity care and midwifery.

Where in working paper No. 5 is the guarantee that NHS buildings, of which most date back to 1918, will be brought up to an acceptable standard? We believe that an ambitious building programme is required to bring those buildings into the 21st century. In my constituency, Southport, a new hospital was opened last week by His Royal Highness Prince Charles. That hospital is the latest in the country and is exceptionally good: it will be a centre of excellence. We are very lucky, but many others are not so lucky.

Where in the proposals is the chapter on democracy and accountability? Social and Liberal Democrats believe that there should be a decentralisation of power in the Health Service, along with decentralisation of accountability. Elected representatives of the public should be involved in supervising the management of services.

At best the review is totally inadequate and a missed opportunity; at worst it will destroy the basic principles of our National Health Service. I would, however, commend it for one reason: it has united the nation in opposition.

6.43 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): One of the documents referred to on the Order Paper as relevant to our debate is the fifth report from the Select Committee on Social Services. I suggest to hon. Members who are not entirely enamoured of the White Paper that they may prefer to rally round the consensus politics contained in the Committee's 64 conclusions and recommendations. We reported seven months before the Government produced their White Paper, and having read the White Paper more than once—as well as the eight working documents—I still prefer our report.

Let me join every other hon. Member who has spoken so far in complaining that the White Paper says nothing about care in the community. The subtitle of the White Paper is "The Health Service: Caring for the 1990s", yet 14 months after the Griffiths report the Government are still saying that they will tell us "quite soon." In my view, community care is central to a future strategy for the Health Service.

I think that most people who have studied the service over the years will agree that it has handled critical cases remarkably efficiently; their criticisms relate to deficiencies in the treatment of chronic cases. The majority of such cases are not in hospitals but out in the community, and with the "greying" of Britain they are becoming increasingly significant. Put in supermarket terms, it is the rising problem of the shelf life of us oldies. I trust that I carry the House with me when I say that future policy on community care is mainstream in any sound strategy for health care as a whole.

As you have invited us to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall deal with only one point. In my view the central proposal in the White Paper is the concept of an internal market within a publicly financed Health Service. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes that, by introducing the spur of competition—that is the phrase that he uses—by distributing funds for health care through a system of contractual relationships and by separating purchasing from providing bodies, the Government will make the NHS more efficient and services for patients—now to be regarded as consumers—will improve. That, I think, is a fair potted version of the essence of the White Paper.

This is an entirely new method of distributing health care. I am aware of no example elsewhere in the world of such an internal market within the public sector. It is therefore an entirely unproven proposition, which is why, in its report last July, the Select Committee recommended caution and trial. We said:

"If the concept of the internal market is to be taken further, it will require to be very carefully planned, monitored and assessed to ensure that too high a price is not paid for its benefits. It should not be introduced nationally before thorough piloting has been done."

That remains my view.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend has thought about pilot schemes and has so far rejected them. I beg him to think again, particularly as the Health Service has not sufficient accountants, computer staff, personnel managers or contract managers to move at the pace that he intends. Let me remind him of what the late Lord Hugh Cecil wrote as long ago as 1912 in his famous book on "Conservatism":

"The surgeon dissects a dead body before he operates on a living one and operates upon an animal before he operates upon a human being: the mechanic makes a working model and tests it before he builds the full-sized machine. Every step is, whenever possible, tested by experiment in these matters before risks are run. In this way the unknown is robbed of most of its terrors".

That is precisely what my right hon. and learned Friend has failed to do. He has not robbed the unknown of most of its terrors, as the reactions of the medical and nursing professions have shown. His basic premise that the

introduction of competition in to the National Health Service will ensure a better deal for patients is highly questionable. It is certainly unproven.

I refer the House to what the *Financial Times* said in its leader on 21 April:

"The United States, the country with the most competitive system, has by far the highest costs: it spends around 12 per cent. of GDP on health care compared with 8 to 9 per cent. in Europe. Britain, the country with the least competitive system, has the lowest costs, spending less than 6 per cent. of GDP. Yet there is no evidence that the average Briton is less healthy than the average West German or American. Nor is the United Kingdom record on innovation poor: in many fields the treatment available in the United Kingdom is among the best in the world."

Thus the basic premise of my right hon. and learned Friend's White Paper that increased competition will provide better health care remains totally unproven. The NHS would be once again reorganised, this time on an unproven premise. I do not know whose bright idea it was —some anonymous economic guru? I respect my right hon. and learned Friend's common sense too much to ascribe authorship of the White Paper to him. I have a feeling that he is arguing a dock brief.

Does that mean that nothing should be done about the known weaknesses of the National Health Service? Certainly not. I remind the House of what we said in the Select Committee report last July:

"Our principal recommendation in this Report is that the strengths of the National Health Service should not be cast aside in a short term effort to remedy some of its weaknesses. At present it is not possible to demonstrate which of the weaknesses of the National Health Service are a consequence of lack of funding and which reflect institutional deficiencies."

We went on to declare:

"A programme of persistent improvement . . . will provide a more effective way forward for the National Health Service than the search for a radical reconstruction of the service".

That may seem to my right hon. and learned Friend to be too slow a way of reforming the National Health Service. He appears to be a Secretary of State in a hurry, but what is the hurry? The National Health Service is not collapsing around his head.

I repeat my warning to my right hon. and learned Friend not to cast aside the strengths of the National Health Service in a short-term effort to remedy some of its weaknesses. I ask him to reflect upon the Aesop fable of the tortoise and the hare. He may fancy himself as the hare in the outside track, but I remind him that the tortoise won that famous race. My right hon. and learned Friend must try to carry public opinion with him, especially the medical and nursing professions, many of whom are not employees but independent contractors within the service.

I am not convinced that my constituents wish to see their GPs become born-again competitors, let alone medical yuppies. If the House thinks that I exaggerate, let me quote from my right hon. and learned Friend's speech to the annual dinner of the Royal College of General Practitioners:

"So in the coming months I will be asking patients to ignore the complaints of GPs who are reluctant to compete. GPs are being asked to compete for each individual's custom as a patient and they are being asked to compete for each individual's money as a taxpayer. We will all get an even better standard of service from those who compete successfully".

I wonder whether we will. A good bedside manner or a good bazaar manner—I know which I prefer and which my constituents prefer.

I therefore beg my right hon. and learned Friend to abandon his ambitious idea to be a hare, to be a pace-setter, and to content himself with being a good, efficient tortoise. I invite him to take his time about the proposed reforms; to initiate some pilot schemes; to add a lot of green edges to his White Paper; and above all to consult and discuss with an open mind. If he bounds ahead at his present pace, he may well end up not a victorious hare, but politically a jugged hare. That would be very nasty for him. It is not a fate I would wish upon him. I invite him to join us tortoises.

6.54 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Unlike at least one Conservative Member, I wish to declare an interest. I am the joint president of Manufacturing, Science and Finance—a union with 40,000 members ranging from consultants to professional white collar workers, junior hospital doctors and GPs. I also speak on behalf of the 625,000 other members of the union and their families who use the National Health Service.

I have followed the Secretary of State's career with great interest. I have seen him in the Department of Health, I have seen him as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at the Department of Trade and Industry and I have seen him back at the Department of Health. Today he seemed most uncomfortable. He appeared to be what he is by profession, a barrister, reading a brief with which he was not particularly happy. He did not give us the answers that we were waiting to hear and, as we have heard, he did not provide the answers that his hon. Friends expected. The best advice I can give the Secretary of State is to go away and think again.

No right hon. or hon. Member would deny that there is room for improvement in the National Health Service. It is highly successful and cost-effective, but we must always consider the priorities. The National Health Service demands money. As the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said, Britain spends a smaller proportion of GDP on the National Health Service than other European countries do, certainly less than our fellow members of the EEC, except Spain, Portugal and Greece. Surely we do not want to be reduced to that level.

I believe that by providing a universal Health Service, we provide a better service than other European countries. Certainly it is extremely efficient. The White Paper does not take into account what is at stake. The National Health Service is treating people. We are not dealing with items on a production line. The White Paper is all about cost-efficiency. It is not about providing more resources and, of course, it will lead to higher administrative costs but not a better service to the people who use it.

When the Secretary of State was discussing the White Paper—and there was very little discussion of it—why were the people who use the Health Service not consulted? I suggest that had the people who use the Service been consulted, quite a different White Paper would have been presented to us today. If the Secretary of State had consulted those who use the National Health Service he would know their opinion. I see that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) is in his place. No doubt he will make a speech later. I do not know whether he uses the Health Service, but certainly the Ministers at the Department of Health do not use it, apart from the Secretary of State who always claims to do so.

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

It is a great pity that Ministers do not use the service more, especially the Prime Minister. If they did, we should have a different White Paper. If people had been consulted, they would have said that rather than urging GPs to have bigger lists, it would have been better to have a reduction in the number of people each GP treats, so that hard-working GPs would have more time for each patient.

I will now deal, specifically, with the proposals in the White paper. Paragraph 2.13 says:

"Local managers . . . will . . . re-examine all areas of work to identify the most cost-effective use of professional skills . . . there is also scope for more cost-effective working in other professions, some of which, such as physiotherapists, speech therapists and chiropodists, make little use of non-professional helpers."

What does that mean? Does it mean that non-professional people will give physiotherapy? The mind boggles if that is the intention. Does it mean that there will be non-professional speech therapists? How will that help people with speech deficiencies? We need more speech therapists who are paid decent salaries, which is quite the opposite of the proposal.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Is my hon. Friend aware that already there are speech therapists who are, in a sense, non-professionals? Areas where the pay that speech therapists can command is low are unable to recruit them, so some hospital administrations have reclassified speech therapists as clerical and administrative workers so that they can pay them higher wages surreptitiously and so attract more staff.

Mr. Hoyle: I am grateful for that intervention. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that that situation is nonsense. The truth is that the pay of speech therapists is low because it is an almost 100 per cent. female profession and that is one of the problems. Shall we have non-professional chiropodists attending to people's feet? The mind boggles.

Paragraph 3.12 says:

"NHS Hospital Trusts will be free to settle the pay and conditions of their staff, including doctors, nurses and others covered by the national pay review bodies."

What does that mean? The MSF has already been told by a leading London teaching hospital that it will pay more in certain grades, but that there will be fewer people in those grades. People such as speech therapists are already overworked and they can hardly cope with their work loads. If some of them are paid more and there is a reduction in numbers, an inferior service will be offered.

Paragraph 9.12 says:

"The Government believes that there is scope for much wider use of competitive tendering beyond the non-clinical support services".

One of the lessons already learned from competitive tendering in the Health Service is that it gives an inferior and less effective service and the person who suffers is the patient. God forbid that competitive tendering should be applied to professions.

According to today's newspapers, at least 140 hospitals are interested in opting out, which means that 200 hospital units could be affected. In Warrington district health authority, Warrington district general hospital is interested in opting out. If the core hospital opts out, it will be impossible for Warrington health authority to plan health care for an expanding area. That will be the case for many health authorities where major hospitals are intent on opting out and it will be impossible to plan health care.

Mr. Flannery: When the Secretary of State was speaking, a whole crowd of us wanted to know who would take the decision to opt out, and although he later intervened four times himself, he would not give way. We do not know whether it will be a democratic process or an undemocratic process. The Secretary of State funked the question every time and would not tell us who will take the decision to opt out.

Mr. Hoyle: I agree with my hon. Friend that we want the answer from the Dispatch Box tonight and I hope that the Minister of State will take note of our comments. From the White Paper, it appears that almost anyone can ask for opting out, including the loosely termed "leagues of friends"—whatever that means. Ultimately, it will be the Secretary of State who will decide, not the people who know about the health priorities in their area. That is the wrong way to run the Health Service, especially as it will mean that local needs will not be taken into account.

We know that the hospitals that opt out will receive a major share of resources, which will be their pay-off for opting out. If the hospitals that opt out receive more, they will attract more consultants, more nurses and more hospital staff. As a result, hospitals that have not opted out will become inferior. They will be unable to attract staff or to provide the same medical services to the people who need them. That is not a desirable state of affairs.

Until now, health authorities have been able to plan for the needs of their area. We want to retain that local input and we want them to be able to plan in that way. The White Paper says:

"Health authorities . . . are neither truly representative nor management bodies."

That is correct in a sense, but the White Paper proposes to take away the representative bodies by taking away the people from local authorities who serve on them. There will be five non-executive members, probably drawn from business, five executive members who are managers of the health authorities and hospitals, and a non-executive chairman.

To what extent will the new bodies be accountable for the health of the district? The Minister must give us an answer. What say will local people who use the Service and the staff have in whether local hospitals opt out? What say will they have in how the health authorities conduct their business? There will be no local input. How will local people who are patients be able to affect decisions about health care in their district? The Minister must answer that question.

Is it desirable that the managers of hospitals should be members of the governing body and so run them? If managers are below par, who will bring them up to scratch? Managers on the management body are hardly likely to bring themselves up to scratch, so surely independent people should do so. I can envisage great difficulties arising.

I might say something about all this other nonsense —for example, the suggestion that to raise money local health authorities might sell insurance services in hospitals. I suggest that the last thing that people want to be offered when they are ill in hospital is an insurance policy. An even more nonsensical suggestion is that health authorities might sell cars on hospital forecourts. I do not

know where that suggestion came from, but having heard the Secretary of State try to sell his White Paper I am inclined to ask who would buy a used car from him; it would be a brave person indeed. Let us stop all this nonsense.

I think that what is in prospect is privatisation little by little. The Government are afraid of saying, "We will privatise the NHS"——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that Mr. Speaker announced that the 10 minutes rule would be applied.

Mr. Hoyle: As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have given way to one or two of my colleagues, but I shall finish my speech within my 10 minutes. I have nearly——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had his allocation of time—10 minutes from 7 o'clock.

Mr. Hoyle: Indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am almost ready to finish. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

We shall end up with what they have in the United States—a cheque-book service with high administrative costs which takes into account people's means rather than their needs when they go for treatment. What we need in this country is a service financed——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

7.11 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I shall confine my remarks to the proposals for self-governing hospitals. I do that because today Stepping Hill hospital, together with Stockport infirmary in my constituency, announced that it was one of six units in the north-west to express an interest in becoming self-governing. I, for one, am mightily pleased. For many years now, I have felt that the two hospitals in my constituency offering acute services would be far better placed if they ran their own affairs, free from influence and interference from the region or from Whitehall.

I must declare an interest because long before I was elected to the House in 1983 I was a director of a retail pharmacist. I have had an interest in health in a minor way —first as the secretary of the Conservative health committee, then as a member of the Select Committee on Social Services, then as a PPS in the old Department of Health and Social Security and now as a PPS in that most benevolent godfather to the NHS of all, the Treasury.

I have been convinced that the real power over what goes on in hospitals—in wards, operating theatres and out-patient departments—is far too remote from the people who actually administer health care. The proposals for self-governing hospitals will give units the opportunity to control their own destiny, and I am delighted to hear that Stepping Hill hospital, with Stockport infirmary, could be one of them.

The accident and emergency department, orthopaedic department and ENT facilities are at the Stockport infirmary while all the other facilities are at Stepping Hill. Perhaps my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will give me a little of his time to allow me to explain the difficulties that Stockport infirmary and Stepping Hill are experiencing because they are on separate sites. Between them they have 930 beds. Because they are on a split site, there is a constant parade not only of specialists but of patients between them. Not only is that far from satisfactory; it is dangerous to patients.

At present, we have a once-in-a-lifetime chance of disposing of the infirmary and I would wholeheartedly support such a move because the neighbouring Station approach in Stockport is being developed and the infirmary could be disposed of for a small fortune. The unit could then be placed on one site at Stepping Hill, thereby enhancing services and making life a great deal more satisfactory for the staff.

Despite the problems that arise because the unit is on a split site, the standard of treatment is high. The service is caring and cheerful and in recent years—as I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—the unit has come top of the north-west value-for-money league for both in-patient and out-patient cases.

I pay tribute to Fred Richards, the district health authority chairman and Peter Milnes, its general manager and to other members of the authority who have had the confidence in Stepping Hill and the Stockport infirmary to suggest them for self-governing status. If the proposal is accepted by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State I have no doubt that the hospital services in Stockport will be even better for staff and patients alike and I believe that the same consideration would apply to general hospitals throughout the country.

I am convinced, as I said, that the decision-making process is far too remote. The unit in my constituency has an annual turnover of £25 million, yet a capital scheme of more than £15,000 has to be referred to the district health authority. Larger schemes go to the regional health authority, to Elephant and Castle and then to Whitehall, passing through dozens of bureaucratic hands and committees. Far too much information on day-to-day management matters is referred upwards to Richmond house and, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, far too little finds its way into the hands of those who really know what is going on —the sister, the consultant and the unit manager, who constantly complain that very little of the information that they collect, which is subsequently processed, finds its way back to them. I am glad to hear that my right hon. and learned Friend has plans to correct that.

The long tail of bureaucracy will be docked when hospitals become self-governing. Information systems will be needed but it will be much easier to have an information system for a single unit than a system serving the whole of the acute hospital sector.

Staff are bound to fear the unknown; we all would. My right hon. and learned Friend has made it crystal clear, however, that the salaries of personnel will be unaffected, as will their terms and conditions, unless they opt for a package that they consider advantageous. That could well happen, as free-standing hospitals will have a keen interest in retaining the best of their staff. Today I spoke to Derek Caldwell, the excellent unit general manager of Stepping Hill about the proposals to make Stockport infirmary and the Stepping Hill hospital self-governing. He said that he looks forward to the change and to being able to provide far better conditions for the nurses who work there. He is enthusiastic about the possibility of creche and welfare facilities and better shift patterns to give those who work at the unit a better quality of life.

[Mr. Tony Favell]

Patients, too, are bound to be better off. Recently, I went to Belgium, and I think that my experience will be of interest to the House. In Belgium, the percentage of GDP spent on health is very similar to that spent here. Some of the hospitals are built by local communes, some by the state, some by universities and some by groups of doctors. There is a multiplicity of providers of care. The cost of treatment is met by national insurance schemes and, as here, treatment is largely free. The national insurance scheme covers virtually the whole of the population and is popular with doctors, patients and staff.

I met the chief administrator of Antwerp university hospital. I asked him, "What is happening with the waiting lists in your hospital?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "How long would one wait for a hip replacement?" He said, "About a week." I said, "How can they do it within that time?" He said, "If we do not do it, the hospital down the road will do it." That is precisely what my right hon. and learned Friend is proposing for patients in the United Kingdom. He has my wholehearted support. I cannot wait to support him in the Lobby tonight.

7.19 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) on his fine maiden speech. He will make a major contribution in the next two years, and an even bigger contribution two years after that when our party forms a Labour Government.

A special group is affected by the proposals; I refer to disabled people. For them, the White Paper is a menacing document. The omission to mention disabled people is menacing. It demonstrates that their long-standing problems will be neglected. There is no mention in the White Paper of disability, and only a passing mention of the mentally handicapped. Bearing in mind that 6·2 million disabled people are important customers of the National Health Service, such studied neglect and total disregard is disturbing.

Despite its name, the National Health Service is not solely concerned with health. For some people, perfect health is not possible. The National Health Service rightly concerns itself with their welfare and rehabilitation and doing what it can to improve health and the quality of life.

Disabled people today are apprehensive and anxious because their needs, which are different from those with acute illnesses, will be even more neglected after the Government use their usual majority to implement their proposals. There is no reference to the serious shortage of qualified therapists whose skills do much to make disabled people's lives tolerable when their limbs malfunction.

People who need hip operations rightly get operations, but those whose limbs do not work are not given proper provision. There is no mention of staffing improvements to care for people with hearing difficulties, and there is nothing about vital support services. There is not even a suggestion of safeguards to reassure disabled people that existing services will be maintained. Let me quote one glaring example. Many people in this country need wheelchairs and artificial limbs. That service is to be incorporated into health authorities in 1991. It is not mentioned in the White Paper, either, and I do not understand why.

The health of disabled people is just as important as that of anybody else. When people lose their limbs and become immobile, they will find that the Disablement Service Authority has advised general practitioners to look hard at whether artificial limbs or wheelchairs are needed. That means that they will be carefully scrutinised before they get an artificial limb or a wheelchair. They will be means-tested. What sort of Government would impose that kind of hard, steely approach on people who require that vital service? For the first time in decades, severely disabled people will have to fight to get artificial limbs or wheelchairs.

There is nothing for which the Secretary of State or his sidekick, the Minister of State, should be proud. Those people should be properly assessed, fitted with limbs and provided with wheelchairs, rather than be deprived of them. *[Interruption.]* There is absolutely no point in the hon. Member grinning. I am making a serious point about disabled people. There is nothing to smile about. I am accusing not the Secretary of State but one of the Government Whips.

The major deficiency of the White Paper is its failure to acknowledge and react to the importance of co-operation between the agencies that give disabled people essential support. I refer to the hospital service, primary medical care, and social service departments. All those agencies act in concert to provide whatever pattern of services is required for each disabled person. They are inextricably interlinked and intertwined. If there is reduced NHS commitment, there will be less co-operation and no certainty that essential information is transmitted and that each piece of the jigsaw will be present when it is required. As a result, a disabled person's quality of life will be diminished.

The philosophy behind the White Paper is that we will no longer aim for the best possible treatment for everyone but will focus on value for money. Of course it is right to examine and improve the efficiency of acute services. I do not blame the Secretary of State for doing that. He is quite right to attempt it. But disabled peoples' problems do not respond to the cut of the surgeon's knife. How will value for them be measured?

I hope that the Minister of State will listen to my next point, because I did him a disservice a moment ago. I want the Secretary of State also to listen. The White Paper includes some words about a Health Service being more responsible to patients' needs. However, a doctor at the BMA conference said that the White Paper proposals would act as a great disincentive to GPs to take disabled people into their practices. Their needs could fall by the wayside.

Disabled organisations are unhappy about the proposed changes that give financial incentives to doctors to have a minimum of costly patients. For example, diabetics cost £500 more a year than the average patient. If a diabetic family were to move into an area, how welcoming would a local GP be? GPs have always been the gatekeepers of hospital provision, but, for the first time, they will have an interest in restricting it. Even though most GPs are people of integrity and humanity, it is a backward step to create a system that provides incentives of precisely the wrong kind.

Before the Secretary of State gets too annoyed, I inform him that I challenged him when I said that the Minister of State had said that special provision would be made only in exceptional circumstances for chronically sick and

disabled people, who would be more expensive to the Health Service. In his reply, the Secretary of State said that the Minister of State had denied using the words I had attributed to him. The Minister was right to deny those words, because they had been, in fact, used by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State was asked whether doctors would seek to remove patients from their lists on budgetary grounds. His reply included the words "in exceptional cases adjustments will be made in respect of individual patients who need more costly treatment."—[*Official Report*, 4 April 1989; Vol. 150, c. 85.]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that he has had his ten minutes.

Mr. Ashley: I am sorry if I have exceeded my time. I must sit down now. If I have done any injustice to the Secretary of State, I am sure that the Minister of State will correct me.

7.30 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): At the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made a comparison between operations carried out in hospitals in the United States of America and those carried out in this country. He said that a substantial number of operations carried out in American hospitals were of dubious value. I think that he was really saying that he was proud of the Health Service, because fewer such dubious operations are carried out in National Health hospitals.

I found that to be one of the hon. Gentleman's most interesting comments, because, for the first time, he was holding up a standard for the Health Service. I believe that that is of considerable value and is, perhaps, the core of the philosophy behind the Health Service, which is that the aim of the Service should be to provide medicine and treatment for everyone who needs it, based on sound medical judgment. I hope that whoever winds up for the Opposition will give an indication of whether they accept that basic philosophy of the Health Service, which was touched on by the hon. Member for Livingston. It is not simply a question of the number of operations or treatments performed; there is also the fact that necessary and useful treatment is being given to everybody who needs it.

I find it difficult to understand in the present structure of the Health Service how that standard can be obtained, and how we can be sensibly advised about the attainment of that standard, without doctors in hospitals and in general practice playing a much bigger role in determining the priorities of the Health Service, which too often are determined, in effect, by administrators and by constraints on budgets at the end of the year. Therefore, one of the features that I welcome in the White Paper is the greater potential role that will be given to consultants and to general practitioners in determining those matters within the limits, and perhaps to some extent beyond the limits, of their practices.

I believe that the principal fear to which the proposals have given rise is the fear of a significant number of patients that, as a result of the proposed indicative budgets, they will not get the medicines and the treatment that they need under the Health Service. I have read the White Paper and the working papers that touched upon that subject and I believe that, on a fair reading of those papers, there is no need for those people to have such fears. It is plainly not intended in the White Paper to do much more than to give a nudge to practitioners, who are or may be over-prescribing or who have the most expensive drug budgets, to consider other ways of treating their patients which are more in line with general practice and which would be equally good, and probably better, professionally. Paragraph 7.15 of the White Paper makes it clear that the White Paper's proposals are certainly not intended to prevent people from receiving the medicine that they need.

It has never been possible in the Health Service for a doctor to have unlimited powers of prescription. There have always been means of dealing in one way or another with over-prescribing. I believe that most people with whom one discusses the Health Service, and who have a good knowledge of what is going on within it, accept that there is some over-prescribing, and many think that there is a substantial amount.

Some patients feel that their doctors have not done their jobs unless they have given them a prescription at the end of their visit. It is too easy for many doctors to satisfy their patients in that respect, because they feel that that is what is required of them. Publicity is needed to encourage patients to question the treatment that their doctors recommend, to ask them to justify the medicines that they are being prescribed and to satisfy themselves that they are useful and that they will not have side effects that will nullify any benefit.

The variations in prescribing that are reported in the White Paper are striking. There are variations between £26 a head in some practices and £48 a head—nearly double—in other practices. It is clear that there is an immense variation, too, in the practices of general practitioners in referring patients to hospitals. In fact, there is a variation of as much as twentyfold. Some general practitioners do the parliamentary equivalent of hon. Members writing to the Minister on virtually every matter that comes before them. Obviously, there is room for a much more sensible practice for prescribing medicines and referring patients to hospital.

Some Opposition Members have exaggerated the rigidity of the indicative budgets, because paragraph 7.17 of the White Paper makes it clear that practices may exceed their indicative budgets for good reasons. Good reasons will be acceptable reasons for going over the top of the budget.

Taken as a whole, the fears that some hon. Members have expressed about the proposals in connection with general practitioners are exaggerated. The proposals should be applauded for the opportunities that they will give for better standards of medical practice, better prescribing and for a more sensible method of referral. Above all, they should be applauded because they will involve general practitioners and consultants much more in the determination of priorities and in the actual spending of money in the Health Service and I believe that that could be of considerable benefit to the Service.

7.40 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): It is possible that the Government's White Paper would never have come to the House if the quotation above Southwark council house was enshrined above the entrance to this Chamber and reminded each hon. Member that the people's health is the highest law. Unfortunately, that philosophy is not contained in the White Paper.

[Mr. John Hughes]

If there has been one constant and unchanging facet of the Government in the past 10 years, it has been their attitude towards the National Health Service and in this instance the constant has been their duplicity. The recently published White Paper is the culmination of that duplicity and it is a good illustration of the dictum that you can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

No one in the real world is under any illusion other than that the White Paper is simply one more step in the deconstruction of the Health Service. It is privatisation by another name. Although some commentators are happy to parrot the Downing street advice and may believe that devolution and improvements are part of an agenda for change, their voices are outnumbered. The Secretary of State's White Paper has invited almost universal scorn and has forged some unlikely alliances.

The people who have spoken up against the White Paper—the GPs, the consultants, the junior doctors, the nurses, the Health Service workers and, most importantly, the public and the patients—may have been ignored by the Government but they have not been misled by a Government headed by the greatest scalpel wielder of all, who is not noted for her sensitivity when wielding that instrument and whose cutting philosophy has savaged the Health Service.

The proposals reflect that inhumane philosophy. They are accountancy proposals, set to balance the books numerically at a grossly under-funded level. They are asset-stripping proposals, which will fragment and decimate the Health Service. They will spawn a Health Service unable to respond to a crisis situation and unable to provide in a foreseeable and especially cold winter the future urgent treatment that will be required by 40,000 to 60,000 elderly citizens who cannot afford to heat their homes or to pay for gas or electricity and whose lives are at risk from hypothermia. The proposals ignore the reality of life in Tory Britain. They gloss over the decimation of service in the past 10 years.

The proposals also ignore and gloss over the treatment of the mentally ill who are now subjected to a conveyor-belt system in which they occupy beds on throughput basis. The pertinent fact that has not escaped the Government—the accountants—is that more hospital beds are required for mentally ill patients than for any other type of patient. The Government have realised that if they can get rid of those mentally ill patients, they can either close the hospitals or push other patients through the system. That is being encouraged by the new management pay structures, by which managers are paid bonuses on the rapid discharge of mentally ill patients. Those patients are sent home on a weekend's leave and when they return, their beds are occupied. They become community flotsam and eke out a miserable existence, roaming the streets.

A crisis exists and the Government's proposals will compound the problem with the voluntary organisations being left to pick up the bill. The Salvation Army carries the brunt of the problem. It provides shelter for the mentally ill who are forced to roam the streets. However, even the Salvation Army is under constraints and that is why so many people with a history of mental illness now exist in squalid bedsits or cardboard boxes.

The Government's proposals fail to make allowances for the disparities in health that can still be observed. Far removed from this cosseted Chamber exist members of our society whose circumstances are a condemnation of the callous system. We step over them when we use the Underground and we see them sleeping in doorways, but we ignore them, and these proposals also ignore them.

The great inequalities and disparities that exist between communities that live side by side in the same region are becoming increasingly clear from fresh evidence. Numerous studies at local authority and ward level have pinpointed pockets of poor health that correspond to areas of social and material deprivation.

One advantage of the present National Health Service is that an overview of the health needs of the nation could be given consideration and that that could be reflected in long-term strategic planning. The nation's health would suffer if long-term planning were inhibited.

The Government and their advisers follow the outlook of Burke and Hare. The Government, the Tory think-tanks, the Adam Smith Institute and all the other scavengers and agents of scavengers have had their eyes on the Health Service for a long time. They measured it for a coffin years ago. One can only imagine how they must have salivated as they studied the books, how their palms must have begun to sweat as they read the accounts and the inventories, and how they must have sighed when they began to comprehend just how much of the people's money was wrapped up in the National Health Service, just waiting to be liberated into their clammy little hands.

However, there was an obstacle—the public would not wear it. Opinion poll after opinion poll told the Government of that, so it was necessary to plan a waiting game. The Health Service was kept short of funds and in due course it was forced to begin a sale of its assets. We know the formula. Bed closures plus rationalisation of service equals closures of hospitals plus disposal of sites. In Coventry, where my constituency lies, this has meant the closure of two hospitals and a number of smaller units in the 10 years of this Prime Minister's Government.

Nevertheless, it was still just a trickle. The problem confronting the Government was how to turn this trickle of equity leakage into a flood, on to which a fully privatised Health Service could be launched.

The White Paper is the solution to that dilemma. Having starved the National Health Service for 10 years of the revenue allocations with which to run its service and having starved it of the capital resources with which to develop its sites, the National Health Service has a good deal of excess capacity. In my constituency, for example, the Coventry Walsgrave hospital has the capacity to handle 8,000 more operations annually, yet patients suffer unnecessarily because the surgeons are prevented from carrying out as many operations as they would like despite the obvious demand. Although theatres are available to carry out the operations, they cannot be staffed because of lack of money.

Having dictated that health authorities must appoint new managers for each of their hospitals, having encouraged them to employ managers with experience in industry, the Government are now proposing to create hundreds of little businesses out of those hospitals—

businesses which undertake work on behalf of the health authority but which can just as easily undertake work on behalf of the private sector. That is the crux of the matter.

The proposals are supposed to be based on the Government's belief that the market is a superior mechanism for the allocation of resources. I do not believe that, because there is not a shred of evidence to support it and although I might believe many things of this Government, I do not believe that they cannot read. They know that private health services throughout the world are a shambles and that they are inefficient and costly to run. We need only to look at the number of unnecessary operations carried out in the United States of America, the vastly greater administrative costs of private systems, the tangle of litigation with massive amounts of money diverted, not into better health care, but into solving the legal mess. Those systems fail to provide for the elderly, mentally ill, physically handicapped and so on.

The Government's White Paper will reduce the National Health Service to the same sort of shambles as a private health care system. It will sink a greater proportion of resources into the pit of that adminstration, reduce the responsiveness of the National Health Service to be able to identify the need, and divert the nation's resources to those who are already well served. The key to that is the privatisation of hospitals, to remove them from public control and put them in the hands of managers in ready-made or management-manufactured groups who are prepared to soil their hands.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has used his allocation of time.

7.51 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The review of which the White Paper is the outcome was called for by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reponse to widespread concerns about the performance of the National Health Service. My response to previous concerns over the years has been that the NHS, like the welfare state, was conceived during the last war and was based on the conditions that existed before it, and that half a century later, our health services should be encouraged to reflect the ambitions of today's families and their ability to afford to provide for their health needs privately.

For some time, I have supported the concept of a health tax, which would be separate from income tax, which would bring home the real cost of the NHS to taxpayers and which could be rebated for private cover. There was no other solution to remedy the unrelenting growth in the demand for resources, and the sheer cost to the Health Service of the growing number of elderly people and of advanced medical technology. The royal commission said as much in 1979.

There was no other way to avoid the series of crises that have scandalised the NHS over the years, or to end the more recent horror stories about health authorities running out of money, wards being closed and operations being postponed that prompted this review. In 1982, the think tank report to the Cabinet recommended precisely that: a shift from a tax-based Health Service to private insurance. As the House knows, the Prime Minister was totally opposed to this privatisation of the Health Service, and she abolished the think tank that proposed it.

Surely there can be no greater evidence than this, together with the massive increases in resources that the Government have provided, of their commitment to a state-run, National Health Service, paid for out of general taxation and free at the point of delivery. The White Paper confirms that commitment, and I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on its aims and the ingenuity of its proposals. I bitterly regret the reactions that we have received from the British Medical Association and from our constituents who have been inspired by some of its members.

I accept that some reactions that I have received from my doctors have been constructive and helpful. However, I utterly condemn the way that some doctors, although by no means all, have totally misled their patients into writing to us, without having any idea what the White Paper proposes. I have received far too many sad and distressing letters from patients such as diabetics, who rely on continuous medication and have been told that, in future, they could be denied treatment. I have received letters from patients who have been told that hospitals are to go private, doctors will be forced to take on more patients than they can handle and to limit the cost of medicines that they prescribe and that treatment will be related to income. None of those statements is true, and it is wholly irresponsible for doctors to scare patients, especially elderly ones, in this way. I believe that the BMA has lost much good will as a result of its campaign.

I turn to what is actually proposed in the White Paper. I welcome the downward delegation of responsibilities to local level, and the option for hospitals to become self governing within the NHS. That will result in the sort of better-organised, more personal hospital service of which local communities were once proud and which many of my constituents feel has been lost in recent years due to excessive bureaucracy and the disappearance of matrons and local hospital boards.

There is no reason why any hospital should not be free to offer its services to health authorities and practices outside its own area. Every hospital is different and develops its own expertise and specialities. My right hon. and learned Friend has emphasised that there is no question of hospitals ceasing to provide non-profitable services. The opportunities that will arise from the proposed new funding arrangements, with money following the patient and the ending of RAWP, the Resource Allocation Working Party—which has been so unfair to my own district health authority—will be better appreciated when they are better understood.

The availability of practice budgets is an imaginative idea which, I am sorry to say, appears to have been widely misunderstood by GPs, who have overlooked the fact that it is optional and entirely voluntary, and is available only to those larger practices already experienced in handling larger budgets. A budget-holding practice will have greater flexibility to use on behalf of its patients and wider opportunities to obtain quicker treatment from the most appropriate hospitals at a price that can be negotiated. That must be in everybody's interest and will bring down waiting times considerably.

It cannot be right to permit a system that tolerates waiting times of a year or more for treatment in one district, when the same operation can be obtained in a few weeks in another district. In my district, the current waiting time for dermatology is five months, for neurology nine months, and for ophthalmology six months. Those waiting times are totally unacceptable. The White Paper proposals will enable GPs to know where the quickest

[Mr. David Atkinson]

treatment can be obtained and make it available to their patients. My only concern is that there will be adequate transport arrangements for patients who seek treatment outside their own areas and adequate post-operative treatment when they return. I look forward to my hon. learned Friend assuring me on both those points in his wind-up speech.

The proposed encouragement of longer patients lists has also been misunderstood. No professionally responsible practice will give less time to patients because it has opted to accept those who have asked to be added to its lists. It is in demand because of its good reputation, which it has earned at the expense of other practices known to be less caring. Patients usually know who are the best doctors and who are the ones who are never there. Under the proposals, the hardest-working doctors will be properly rewarded, and that has to be right.

Similarly, no good doctor will prescribe inappropriate medication because of the introduction of indicative drug budgets. There was no evidence that this was the case following the introduction of the limited list, which was greeted with howls of protest five years ago and which has now enabled an extra £300 million to be spent elsewhere on improving health services. When it is realised that only 3·5 per cent. of all prescriptions are for patented products, it becomes self-evident that the remaining 96·5 per cent. of the drugs bill open to generic prescriptions represents an enormous potential for savings that has been estimated at an annual saving of £700 million.

It has been clear for some time that the Griffiths reforms for more efficient management of our health authorities have proved a disappointment. I fully accept the White Paper's proposals for streamlining their management. I should, however, record the opposition of my borough council to the proposed removal of councillors from the local authorities, although they will not be precluded from serving on local authorities if they have a management role to contribute.

I am glad that the White Paper does not seek to abolish the community health councils, one of which I served on myself. They can provide a much more effective channel for local views, including those of local authorities, on the quality of local services. It will be up to them to hold local health authorities, hospitals and practices accountable for their findings.

As my right hon. and learned Friend knows, I remain critical of him for not referring in the White Paper to the Griffiths report on community care, which is now more than a year old. I anticipate that he will put that right as soon as possible. Apart from that, I offer a warm welcome for his proposals. Given our record of more resources, doctors, nurses and treatment than ever before, they can only help to make a good National Health Service even better.

8.1 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): As the Secretary of State said, the debate on these proposals is moving on. It is moving on from the ground of principle, which the Government have already decisively lost, to the ground of the implementation of this extraordinary contraption—the network of cash limits and contracts. On this new ground, the Government's prospects are, if anything, much worse than they were on the ground of principle.

Wriggle though the Government may, it is clear that the network of budgets is intended to constitute cash limits. Cash limits have already been extended for the first time to family practitioner services under the Health and Medicines Act 1988 which recently became law. GPs fully expect, and are entitled to expect—and the wording of the working papers gives them good grounds to expect—that these budgets will become cash limits.

We are also told in the working papers that the contracts which hospitals which opt out make for their patients are to be legally enforceable. We are told that it is to be hoped that that will not necessitate too much litigation, and that some arbitration mechanism may be introduced. I suppose that, if a person has a coronary bypass operation at an opted-out hospital, and it goes wrong, he will be uncertain whether to head for the High Court or the hospital.

These are real anxieties. The administrative machinery that these working papers are intended to promote gives grounds for considerable anxiety. On 22 March, a document was sent out from the NHS management executive to regional health authorities, and it has received all too little publicity. It set out what the regional health authorities must do by 5 May—a date that has already passed. Among the proposals in the document are not only suggestions for employing a great many extra staff administrative staff and for the creation of a great many administrative positions in all sorts of individually specified support services, but a hard-to-find proposal that regional health authorities should have expressed a view by 5 May on whether blood transfusion and ambulance services should be put out to contract. These are the forced administrative marches on which the Government are having to embark to get the proposals through.

The Secretary of State has repeatedly said that the doctors have started from a basis of outright rejection of the proposals, but some of the most telling criticisms of the proposals have come from doctors who support them. I instance, from my region, Mr. Brendan Devlin, who supports the White Paper's proposals and is a consultant at North Tees general hospital. He says that he is worried that the consultants' car park will be completely taken up by the Porsches of yuppie accountants. It is clear from that that many people who have a right to be wary of what the future holds, and who have already expressed themselves on political and administrative grounds supporters of the White Paper's proposals, are fearful about whether they can be implemented.

The Government will also change the mechanism by which cash allocations start to flow through the system. The principal element in these cash allocations is to be a bob-a-nob one-allocation per head of population. We are assured in the White Paper that that means that resources will automatically flow to areas of growing population, but it is not pointed out that they will also automatically flow away from areas in which the population is declining.

The system of allocations proposed for practice budgets, prescription budgets, and regional and district health authority budgets cannot be implemented merely on a per capita basis. The system will not bear the weight. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) has already celebrated the end of the RAWP mechanism, but he should be careful lest, as the Government's

proposals go into operation, something far more horrendous than RAWP replaces it—a mini-RAWP for every NHS authority and hospital, and for every general practitioner in the country. The information that the Government have at their disposal cannot bear the weight of such a system, and they are foolish to try it.

Our information about prescription budgets leads to the amazing conclusion that the lowest spend per head is in Oxfordshire, and the highest spends are in Merseyside, the north-west and the north. There is nothing surprising about that; what is surprising is the belief, in the face of that information, that the Government can allocate these resources on a per capita basis and expect matters to continue just as they are now in the north-west, Merseyside and the north.

There are certainly grounds for grave concern. Abolition of RAWP and the introduction of per capita budgeting is disastrous news for areas which have depended upon RAWP and in which per capita spends are higher than the national average because of the make-up of the population. It may be of interest to note that this is not just a north versus south issue. Areas where prescription spending is very high in the south include Dorset, which includes Bournemouth, and the Isle of Wight, which includes Ryde, Shanklin and Ventnor—all areas in which inconvenient elderly people hang on and in which per capita spending will work against them.

These proposals are an administrative nightmare and an absurdity. The Government should be cautious about pressing forward too rapidly with this sort of proposal. We do not have the administrative machinery in place to support their implementation or to protect the Government from the inevitable disasters that will ensue.

For several years now, the Government have cash-limited hospital services; now they are starting to cash-limit general practitioner services. By means of the poll tax/community charge, they are cash-limiting local authorities' social services. How will the strain of caring for the growing numbers of elderly people on whom the bulk of health and social service money in spent be taken up? We cannot put a price tag on a stroke patient, a mentally handicapped patient or mentally ill person. The attempt to do so will be foolish and will produce widespread public unrest: it will not work. When I visited the largest voluntary aided hospital in central Brussels recently and saw over the door the sign, "We take American Express", I saw what the Government intend. The proposals are not working for patients; they are working for lawyers and accountants.

8.9 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I support at least the broad thrust of what the Government are seeking to achieve in the proposals outlined in the White Paper. Unlike those who are wholly critical and negative in their submissions on the White Paper, I do not see the proposals as necessarily cast in stone. I hope during the next few minutes to express a few reservations, all within the general ambit of broad support for the Government's proposals.

I can never understand why those who oppose the Government's proposals for reform of the National Health Service seem to consider that, alone among our national institutions, after 40 years and with some obvious imperfections, the National Health Service should remain unchanged. There are many things that few of us wish to change, but there are areas that demand attention as the whole structure of the country changes during the 1980s and as we move towards the 1990s.

I am slightly concerned about the speed with which the Government seem to be aiming to introduce the changes. There has been a good deal of discussion in the debate about the hare and tortoise and so on. While I do not want pilot schemes, inevitably some self-governing hospitals will get into operation more quickly than others. We should watch carefully the progress of the early self-governing experiments. I should be happy if my hon. and learned Friend the Minister could assure me that that is the broad intention of the Government.

It is difficult to understand why critics of the proposals assume that we have either the proposals for change embodied in the White Paper or increased funding of the National Health Service. By no means are the two mutually exclusive. The reason why there is no reference in the White Paper to increased National Health Service funding is that is not a new policy. We have been increasing beyond the rate of inflation the amount spent on the National Health Service all through the decade during which we have been in office. I am irritated when some people, instead of submitting positive proposals, assume that we have the White Paper proposals or increased funding. My support for the proposals depends upon the assumption that we shall continue to improve funding of the National Health Service.

Although the Secretary of State has dealt with the matter already, I hope that the Minister will forgive me if I return to the point about the elderly people who have been frightened by the expressions of opinion of a number of people opposed to the proposals. They have said that, when the proposals are fully implemented, there will be real difficulties in taking care of the elderly patients on doctors' lists. As I understand it, the allocation which it is proposed to make to a general practitioner will take full account of the fact that there is an age relationship in the composition of the doctor's list. I note with approval that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister is indicating assent. He cannot repeat that assurance too often.

In a wholly irresponsible way those who have been criticising the proposals have been unnecessarily and cruelly frightening old people. Old people have come to me —I suspect that my hon. Friends have had the same experience—saying that they are fearful of the consequences of the proposals; they think that they will be excluded from their GP's list for no other reason that the fact that they are aged. It is high time we nailed that lie.

I approve of the concept of self-governing hospitals, although we should be careful not to pursue the idea at such a pace that we risk damaging a new tier of choice for medical care. We already have the private sector and the National Health Service. They will continue, but an additional tier of choice for medical care should be welcomed rather than criticised.

Critics have given the firm impression that self-governing hospitals will be outside the National Health Service. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the opportunity in reply to the debate to make it crystal clear to people outside the Chamber that self-governing the hospitals may be, but outside the Health Service they will not be. I cannot stress that sufficiently. Malign

[Mr. Robert McCrindle]

propaganda of the blackest sort has been put around by, I regret to say, some members of the British Medical Association who should be ashamed of having done so.

In self-governing hospitals we are talking about an experiment. Certainly they will be a new dimension in health care. If a hospital decides to go along the self-financing route and finds later, for one reason or another, that that is not successful or if it wants to reconsider its decision, what will happen? I am not clear about whether such a hospital could be readmitted to the National Health Service. I should be grateful if the Minister would turn his attention to that.

On the question of prescribing, I have no doubt that there is a vast amount of over-prescribing by some doctors. The implication that the Goverment, as the representative of the taxpayer, have no responsibility for taking account of wide disparities in prescribing is folly in the extreme. I support the discouragement of expensive over-provision of drugs by some GPs in comparison to others that we have all noticed.

About five years ago we were told that the introduction of the limited list would affect the clinical judgment of general practitioners and that all we were interested in was saving money. In one year of operation of the limited list, we have saved £75 million. I ask hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the Chamber how many complaints they get today from GPs or from patients that we are providing a less good service than we set out to do when the National Health Service was introduced.

I echo the sentiment of some of my hon. Friends that the White Paper proposals are one arm of an important reform. The other arm must inevitably be community care. We are having a slightly disjointed debate in that we cannot relate some of the attractive proposals to what we plan to do on community care. I hope that we shall get a response to the Griffiths report as soon as possible.

We are accused of privatisation of the Health Service. Do not hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition side——

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): May I point out that there are also honourable women here?

Mr. McCrindle: I beg the hon. Lady's pardon.

Do not hon. Members recall that, when an investigation was mounted a year and a half ago, the whole idea was that it would lead to privatisation? Some hon. Members on the Government side, including myself, expressed great concern about that. It is the fact that privatisation is not being proposed that allows me to lend my warm support to the proposals in the White Paper.

8.19 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I am delighted to have an opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) on his election and his speech. It is always exciting to be elected to the House of Commons, but it is especially exciting to be elected in the circumstances that he was. As for his speech, he combined humour with sincerity and we all look forward to listening to him again.

I have several things in common with my hon. Friend. One is that we are both members of the MSF which has a large number of its members working in the NHS, and I am sponsored by my trade union. I am also vice-president of the Socialist Health Association, which for decades campaigned to establish a national health service. It was on the basis of its work that the NHS was eventually created in 1948.

I have never heard anyone in the Socialist Health Association or in the Labour party claim that the NHS is a perfect institution. Nye Bevan himself would never have made that claim. We all know that the NHS needs to be improved and extended. It needs to be improved in the whole range of services known as community care and it needs to be extended in the sense that the influence of the Department of Health should be extended, into other policy areas, because we shall never improve the health of the British people unless we tackle the problems of unemployment, poverty, inadequate and unsuitable housing and a whole range of other social evils.

We have never pretended that the NHS is perfect, but the White Paper has nothing to do with those issues. It is concerned with one thing and one thing only—the cost of the NHS. That is not surprising, because it owes its origins to the traditional Tory obsession with keeping public expenditure as low as possible in order to make the maximum amount of room for tax cuts. That is what the White Paper is all about.

We all know that during the period of the Conservative Government the Health Service has had more money. Its money has increased by, on average, 1·6 per cent. in real terms every year. But we also know that the Health Service needs an extra 2 per cent. in real terms every year to take account of changes in population, improvements in medical techniques and other factors. The truth is that under this Government there has been a real cut in the money available for the NHS.

The Government are not concerned with trying to reduce the cost of the NHS by removing the causes of ill-health; they are trying to do it by relying on the traditional Tory belief in competition. They are particularly concerned with reducing the cost of the hospital service and they want hospitals to compete for patients and to compete on price. The whole point of the White Paper is to bring the ethics of business and the economics and techniques of the retail trade into the NHS.

The Government want to convert hospitals into health supermarkets. Everything will depend on what can be done most profitably and on the relationship between what it costs to provide a particular treatment or perform a particular operation and what patients or their doctors are prepared or can afford to pay. That is what is at the heart of the White Paper.

People in hospitals will become used to phrases such as "what the market will bear". The criterion for deciding whether treatment or an operation can be provided will be the gross profit margin, not an assessment of need. The prime consideration will be the cost of treatment, not its effectiveness. Everything will be based on what is cheapest, not what is best, and particularly not what is best value for money.

It has been said that the White Paper is a charter for accountants. That may be true, but it does not stop there. It is not only accountancy that will be extended in the hospital service: a sales and marketing department will have to be introduced for the first time into local hospitals. What is the point of providing an operation at a lower price than any other hospital if that fact is not advertised? Hospitals, like supermarkets, will be driven to advertise their prices. Sales and promotion will become the order of

the day. It is not just accountancy that will expand: there will be a new department to promote, advertise, peddle and push hospitals to doctors.

General practitioners will be on the receiving end not only of sales representatives of drug companies, as they are now, but of the same sales techniques and promotions from hospitals as well. General practitioners will become small traders with their practice budgets. It is bringing hospitals into a vast market place.

Forty years ago, the main achievement of a Labour Government was to take the health of the British people out of the market place. It must be the top priority of the next Labour Government to repeat that achievement.

8.25 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I find it difficult to understand why the White Paper should be greeted with such an incredible fuss. I rather suspect that many people have not read it, and their reaction may be based on the BMA's reaction to it or on local comments put out by doctors and others, not least Labour politicians.

A number of factors have helped to make the reaction sharper than it deserves to have been. There has been some confusion over the general practitioner's contract. I hope that those issues have now been settled and that we can have a more rational debate about the White Paper. I made a summary of the points raised with me so far by local doctors and when the points relating to the contract were taken away there were many fewer controversial points left for discussion.

There is a fear of change. People are extremely cautious about changes in the NHS. There is an element of the hypochondriac in everyone, and people are prepared to imagine the worst circumstances and wonder how they will fare.

The Government may have underestimated the yawning gap that already seems to exist between their record on the NHS and people's perception of it. Conservative Members take it for granted that the amount of money spent by the Government has increased from £8 billion per annum to more than £26 billion per annum. A constituent wrote to me the other day and said that those figures were widely accepted as false. The fact that someone can say that of publicly audited figures shows how far we have to go in proving our bona fides in our proposals for the NHS.

The other difficulty has been that the reorganisation towards the centralisation of acute services on a district general hospital, a process which began long before the Government took office, has had the effect of taking acute services away from people, making people suspicious of any reorganisation in the NHS. They feel that specialist services have had to go further away from them and they see that as deprivation.

The situation is ripe for misunderstanding and for mischief makers such as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who made a disgraceful speech this afternoon. The difficulties for the Government may be compounded because the White Paper is long on description but short on explanation in some key areas. Many patients have got it wrong, many doctors are confused and there is genuine doubt in some quarters about how some of the new ideas will work when implemented.

One of the problems that we have experienced in my part of Essex for some time is that money has not been moving with patients, and I welcome the fact that it will do so under the new system. I am grateful for the idea that there should be per capita funding. That will be helpful to my constituents. The population of Essex has grown as the population of London has fallen, yet the resources have not come with those people at the same rate. If practice budgets will be a further reinforcement of the new arrangements I am prepared to welcome those as well. It is amazing how various aspects of that reform are being misrepresented. It is being suggested that patients may be forced to have the cheapest forms of treatment, but the matter should be examined from the other point of view, when it will be appreciated that the proposal will give doctors greater clout to obtain the better treatment that they want for their patients.

It is unsatisfactory that people must wait 24 months for a cataract operation if they want to go to their most local hospital in my constituency. If they were prepared to travel not a great distance, they could have the operation within a month. Under the present system, that choice is not represented to patients as clearly as it should be. I hope that it will be in future.

Some GPs in my area worry about access to other hospitals, especially when they are in other district health authority areas and, in some cases, in other regional health authority areas. There is great concern, for instance, about continuing access to Addenbrookes for people in the Saffron Walden area. I believe that, under the practice budget, doctors will have greater clout in securing access to Addenbrookes. Under the existing system they have come under threat of losing the right to refer patients to that impressive hospital.

But there is need for clarity on how contracts will operate in practice. By definition, a contract requires agreement on both sides, so while it may be said that a group practice or district health authority may negotiate a contract with a hospital, that does not mean that it will get a contract with a hospital. What will happen if a hospital refuses to make a contract with a DHA or group practice? Will there be a narrowing of choice for non-budget holding practices, whether they choose not to be budget holders or are not big enough to be budget holders?

Where the district health authority must negotiate on behalf of the GPs in its area to get in its contract the services that it wants, will there be a genuine meeting of minds between GPs and the DHA? GPs are sometimes influenced by their desire to refer patients to a particular consultant as opposed to a particular hospital. Can contracts be made so that GPs may pick and choose between consultants and hospitals?

As some of my hon. Friends have pointed out, there is fear in the minds of some patients, in relation to indicative drug budgets, that doctors will put cost before effectiveness in prescribing. I do not believe that there is any foundation in that fear. Doctors will not overturn all their professional judgment in such a way. It is unfortunate, however, that some doctors have been prepared to play to that fear, so I understand why people have become worried.

The limited list experience shows that it is possible to achieve further savings. My father practised as a pharmacist for nearly 60 years. He regaled me with tales of the over-prescribing that could occur and the preference that some had for one drug over another when there was no generic difference between the two. There is scope for further improvement.

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

To say that there is scope for improvement is not to castigate all doctors as irresponsible. My local doctors, favoured for the most part with modern premises for their practices, are working well with the PACT—prescribing analyses and costs—system, and some believe that that is the core of the future approach. They wonder whether we need move so fast to indicative drug budgets. At least the principle exists. I see nothing wrong with the idea of medical audit, especially when that audit on GPs is undertaken by other GPs.

I hope that the Secretary of State will go to some trouble to persuade the more cautious GPs that there are new opportunities as a result of the Government's plans. The Government hope that the practice can be a place where more can be done at the expense of more being done of a minor nature in the hospitals, that in future GPs will be paid for their efforts in that respect, and that if GPs have a particular interest in pursuing a line of medicine, they will be rewarded for that in a way that they are not rewarded now. It must be made clearer that such opportunities exist and that general practice will become an enriching experience in the widest sense under these plans, rather than a narrower, restrictive experience.

The White Paper contains some interesting, radical and imaginative ideas which merit not hysterical rejection but careful study. The fact that the Government are prepared to face these issues should be warmly welcomed.

8.35 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I begin by congratulating the Prime Minister on enabling me to hold a real old-style political meeting in my constituency. Such a meeting was called three weeks ago to discuss the National Health Service—it was convened by GPs in the area especially to discuss the White Paper proposals, and more than 350 people turned up.

They came from all social classes because of their concern about the effects of what the Government propose. At the conclusion of the meeting, a resolution was passed deploring the White Paper proposals, which I forwarded to the Minister. I shall therefore articulate the concerns of my constituents on some of the issues that concern them.

On Sunday I met an 82-year-old who has had his legs removed in recent months. He asked me to express his point of view to Parliament and to tell the Secretary of State that he wants to be looked after in the same way that my father was cared for after he had his legs off. For 10 years, my father was cared for by local district nurses. My constituent wants the same quality of care. I hope that the Secretary of State will take that and similar issues seriously and explain, when he replies to the debate, what proposals he has for people such as my constituent.

The Government have not been able to convince anyone of the wisdom of their proposals. Certainly they have not convinced the medical profession. They have not been able to convince the nation of the need for these changes because the blueprint for the White Paper plan was drawn up without reference to the users of the NHS. It was an exclusive group of people who drew it up. One had to be a Member of Parliament to be on the panel. Indeed, one had to be not just any Member, but a Tory Member. Even that was not enough. One had to be a Cabinet Minister.

That exclusive and closed group of people decided what was best for the NHS and the 55 million people of Britain. The changes sprang from an ideological perspective. They were not based on any objective analysis of the current position of the NHS or of the needs of society. That comes as no surprise to us, because the Prime Minister is on record as saying that there is no society. It must be easy for the Government to determine policy in that manner, because they have only ideological tenets to go on; there is no pragmatism in their approach, and that means that inconvenient facts cannot get in the way of what they want to achieve.

I have had more than 200 responses from my constituents and over a score of GPs have put their views to me on this subject. It is only fair, therefore, that I should articulate to the House some of the points that they have made, and I trust that the Minister will give full answers to those points. For example, one GP wrote to me saying that he was already doing much of what was being proposed. He wrote:

"For the last 15 years as a practice we have performed paediatric developmental assessments on our pre-school population. More than 90 per cent. of children are given all their routine immunizations within the practice. My part-time female partner has organised within the practice a Well Woman Clinic for all our female patients aged between 25 and 60. We do all our own night visiting. Three years ago we produced a practice information leaflet for patients and last year the practice produced an annual report. We have just purchased a second computer. Finally, we are interested in health education, having been instrumental in setting up 'The Vale of Leven Health Promotion Project.'"

That GP went on to write:

"I point these facts out simply to show that this letter does not come from someone opposed to change or who practises medicine simply with the aim of maximising income. I firmly believe that the White Paper proposals will undermine good general practice."

Writing about capitations fees, he said that he failed to understand how his standard of medicine would be improved by increasing the emphasis on the capitation element of his remuneration. He wrote:

"If I set about chasing heads, since there are only 24 hours in the day, I will have less time to spend on each patient. Equating good medicine with high patient numbers is arrant nonsense."

He wrote about the money-follows-patient argument:

"The White Paper says that 'the GP is the patient's key adviser'. This is true but I can foresee my being unable to refer my patient to the most appropriate consultant if that consultant works in a hospital outwith my Health Board area. My ability to refer such a patient will depend on my Health Board having made sufficient provision with the outside hospital. This obviously will not be a restriction in areas where patients can afford private medical care and thus medicine will become two-tier, with those who can afford it getting high quality care but those who depend on the NHS getting what their local Health Authority can afford."

That is a perverse version of patient choice, particularly for the poor, who do not have the money to move from hospital to hospital. Even if the patient can rustle up the money, one can be sure that their relatives might not be able to afford it.

In their White Paper, the Government insist on 20 hours' consultation per week, when GPs must see their patients face to face in their surgeries. One general practitioner writes:

"At present, I do not do so but in an average week I do spend 45 hours in clinical medicine, 3 hours in practice

administration and am on call for a further 25 hours (and being 'on call' usually entails going out in the evening to see patients and having disturbed sleep one night in four)."

What price the Government's rationale for 20 hours' consultation in the light of that?

As to increased choice, another GP writes:

"The principle that practice budgets will lead to increased choice for patients is fundamentally flawed. I have freedom of choice at present to refer my patients to any specialist that I like and the proposals in this White Paper can only restrict that. These proposals if implemented will also mean that some of my patients will have to travel longer distances for their care."

Another general practitioner writes about the place of women doctors:

"As a woman doing part-time work in general practice, it appears that the present proposals may well prevent me continuing to practise medicine."

In Scotland just the other day, the organisation Women Doctors for Choice was reported as commenting that

"the emphasis on capitation payments discourages doctors from taking on extra partners, as that would reduce their income."

That provision will discriminate against women GPs, and when one remembers that females consult their doctors four times more frequently than males, that must mean less choice for female patients too. One doctor also comments:

"I note that the needs of the chronic ill, elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped appear not to warrant comment in the Paper."

The White Paper puts a price on the patient's head. The Government say that it is their intention to help people, but they will do so only in part. They will not go the whole way. The White Paper proposes a system such as that of the United States, where 40 million people have no private health insurance whatsoever and in addition, 1 million people every year transfer to a different hospital purely on financial grounds. The White Paper will do nothing for the community. My constituents tell me so, and I hope that the Minister will listen and will at least give them an intellectual response to the points they make.

8.42 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I join other right hon. and hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) on his excellent and enjoyable maiden speech. My right hon. and hon. Friends will clearly endeavour to win back that seat in the next general election, but meanwhile we wish the hon. Gentleman well, hope that he will enjoy his time in the House, and look forward to hearing him speak again.

To listen to some of the attacks made on the White Paper in the House this afternoon and outside it on other occasions, one would think that all was well with the Health Service and always had been. Basically all is well, but our critics ignore the fact that just over a year ago, people were marching in the streets and constituents were writing to us about the Government's intentions. Despite ever-increasing funding, the Health Service seemed to be failing to deliver in certain respects. The public were asking where the money was going and what was wrong.

As a consequence, the most fundamental review of the Health Service since it began 40 years ago was undertaken. Since the conclusions of that review and the publication of the White Paper, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and virtually every Conservative Member has been subjected to one of the most abusive, damaging and misleading campaigns that I can remember since first entering the House. The Opposition's knee-jerk reaction was predictable. They shamelessly used the Health Service and the public's concern as a political weapon, and their allies in the British Medical Association conducted a campaign of misinformation that was at the very least unhelpful, and which in many cases unjustifiably played on the fears of the most vulnerable in our society —the old and the sick.

Some of that propaganda was contradictory. It was claimed both that the Government were forcing doctors to take on more patients than they could cope with, and that they were forcing doctors to turn away the old or chronically sick. The contradictory nature of those accusations seems to have gone unnoticed, for smear and innuendo are what matter. Some patients are told that doctors may be limited in the extent to which they can investigate unusual symptoms, while others are warned that restrictions will be placed on the amount of money that doctors can spend on drugs. Some critics send out letters with death's heads on them. One of my constituents wrote to the local newspaper saying that she was told that the number of doctors would be reduced as a consequence of the White Paper.

That is all very nasty stuff, and completely one-sided. The White Paper's critics never tell patients that some doctors have been over-prescribing for years and that the monitoring of drug budgets is meant not to cut necessary expenditure but to defeat unnecessary prescribing. Neither do the critics reveal that the cost of drugs is now more than the cost of the doctors prescribing them, that some doctors prescribe twice as much as others, and that the White Paper's objective is to root out bad practice and to encourage the best. The critics' motto is, carry on, doctor; throw more money at the problem and then ignore it.

That is not the way in which I want to see the Health Service progress. Instead, we must honour the principle that has held good for 40 years of a comprehensive Health Service available to all regardless of income, and financed mainly from taxation. Instead of guerrilla warfare, let us start again, by accepting my right hon. and learned Friend's total commitment to the NHS. Let us recognise that funding has increased by 40 per cent. even after inflation, from £8,000 million in 1979 to £26,000 million this year. Let us accept that there are now 7,000 more nursing and midwifery staff and 14,000 more doctors, enabling many more people to be treated.

We must recognise also that wide variations in the provision of health care still occur throughout the country; that people wait much longer for operations in some areas than others; that the cost of treatment differs by as much as 50 per cent. between hospitals; and that there are enormous variations in drugs bills as between one GP and another. We should start by accepting those indisputable facts, and conclude that improvements can be made to the overall operation of the Health Service that have very little to do with the amount of money that is spent.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State should acknowledge in turn the genuine concern felt by Health Service professionals that certain significant details have yet to be spelt out. Most right hon. and hon. Members have received a helpful briefing from the Royal College of Nursing and from the Association of Community Health Councils that are couched in much less strident language than that used by the BMA. Their concerns should be examined and my right hon. and learned Friend should respond to them directly. So much

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

opportunity for excellence is provided by the White Paper that one can only be saddened by the hostility with which it has been met by some Health Service professionals.

A shining exception to some of the attitudes of the Health Service to the White Paper concerns the proposal to allow health authorities and hospitals to become self-governing trusts. The Opposition's reaction to this locally and nationally—the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who is in his place, referred to it this afternoon—was predictable. They called it back-door nationalisation and said that real patients would not be treated, that it was just taking the Health Service into a privatised area. Such fears are nonsense, but the fact that nowhere in the White Paper are these things ever suggested does not deter the Opposition at all.

The Bassetlaw health authority, which partly covers my constituency, has expressed an interest in becoming a National Health Service trust. It is not proposing to opt out. It has not even decided to become a trust. It has simply expressed an interest. It has consulted widely, with consultants, with the staff and with the Manchester health authority. The opposition has been totally political and I condemn the blanket refusal even to consider looking at the proposal. It gives an opportunity and a possibility for our health authority to come out of the clutches of the region and be able to run its affairs as it knows best. It will, I believe, be the patients who gain, and the losers will be the party politicians and those of the Left who try to deprive the patients of its benefits.

8.51 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I have listened with great care to Conservative Members trying to defend the NHS proposals. There has been great paranoia on that side as they have constantly tried to defend proposals which are clearly indefensible.

I listened with great care to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle). He came to the House tonight, apparently, to nail a few lies, as he put it. He came to the House to tell us that self-governing hospitals will not be outside the NHS. I have read the White Paper and I agree with him that that is what is proposed in it. But what we, our constituents and doctors worry about is what it will lead to eventually. It is the first step towards privatisation and that is what Conservative Members have failed to tell us tonight. They hide behind the words in the White Paper, knowing perfectly well that the Government really want to privatise the NHS.

The Prime Minister herself prefaced the White Paper by saying that the needs of the patient would be paramount. That word is used in the Children Bill as those of us who have been on the Committee on that Bill know. The Minister of State knows exactly what I am talking about because he, too, is on that Committee. We have looked in the dictionary and we find that "paramount" means of the greatest importance, or pre-eminent. But we do not get the impression that the paramountcy of the patient's needs is the thread that runs through the White Paper.

The Prime Minister uses another phrase:

"to secure the best value for money."

That, in my view, more accurately describes the way the Government look at the changes in the NHS. To be charitable, on the one hand it means keeping a tight budget, but on the other it means making do with fewer resources by imposing budgetary controls on doctors' practices and self-governing hospitals.

The Government claim that the overwhelming hostility to their proposals stems from wicked doctors spreading fishermen's tales. They also hide under the cloak of that now well-worn phrase "We cannot get our message across." We have heard it all again tonight—a combination of doctors, an antagonistic press and a hostile Opposition making matters worse for the Government in trying to get their message across.

My belief, shared by my constituents, is that these proposals are inherently wrong and that the public have been right. Time after time in the last few weeks we have heard the public speak with a united voice. That is why the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) is in his seat; the public of Wales spoke on the Government's proposals for the NHS. I congratulate him on his victory and it would be churlish for any hon. Member to deny that it was due to the fact that the Government have failed miserably to tell us what they really mean by the NHS proposals.

What is also significant, and the Government must take this on board, is that in that same election a GP stood on an anti-NHS-proposals platform and he did not gather the small number of votes a normal fringe candidate gets; he polled almost 1,000 votes. The Government must surely remember that lesson.

Why are people unhappy with these plans? It may be unpalatable for those on the Government Benches, but it is true to say that we in Wales have an emotional attachment to the National Health Service because we know that the architect of that Service came from Wales. But even judged against hard facts, this review will spell disaster for the patients and hospital services in Wales. In Gwynedd, for example, we have seen this year proposals to close small village or community hospitals because the area health authority has, it says, been starved of cash. I am pleased to see the Minister who has responsibility for health at the Welsh Office in his place. He and I have debated these issues about hospitals in Gwynedd.

We have heard even from Conservative Members tonight the view that the community care provisions of the Griffiths report have not been debated. There is not a single community hospital in my constituency that meets the criteria set out by the Department of Health and there is no plan to build one in the immediate future. In addition, very much as the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said about disability, there are no discernible plans to develop services for the elderly. We all know of terrible situations in which constituents ring hon. Members late at night distressed because hospitals have told them that their elderly relatives have to leave and find a home elsewhere. This lack of co-ordination between the Health Service and social services departments of local authorities is something we must discuss. That is why it is vital that we discuss the Griffiths report quickly.

In terms of the rural scene in Wales, the element of choice is meaningless. How can a doctor in Holyhead make a choice about which hospital is most suitable for his patient? The nearest acute hospital is 20 miles away and he has to make arrangements to travel there. Where does he go if Bangor cannot take the patient or the waiting list is too long? He goes to Bodelwyddan, which is 70 miles away. The choice is meaningless in rural Wales.

I believe that these plans are doomed to failure. All the brave words of the Secretary of State, and, I expect, of the Minister in responding, will not convince people that the reforms are necessary and in the best interests of our people. It would be far better for the Government to save face tonight and withdraw these plans than to destroy the Health Service and be destroyed at the next election.

8.59 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): There is little doubt that the National Health Service is a respected British institution, and those who have used it seldom criticise it. Until recently, however, most of us received complaints in our postbag from people who had not used it, and who wanted a better service. Those complaints came because expectation was greater than provision.

Now we find that there is nothing wrong with the Health Service at all. Constituents are writing to us, "Please do not change the Health Service: leave it as it is." Doctors, too, are writing to say, "Do not change anything. We have the finest health service in the world." Even doctors who have, in the past, written to complain are telling us to leave the service as it is. They are saying that for the time being, that is: I suspect that if we leave the service as it is it will not be long before they write again to complain that they want a review of the Health Service because they think that it should be improved.

Those who say that we should leave the service as it is add a proviso. They say, "Leave it as it is, but give us more money." They do not acknowledge that, over the past 10 years, real-terms funding has increased by 40 per cent.

Following the introduction of the White Paper, I met doctors in my constituency in small groups of four or five. I managed to see between 25 and 30. I did a deal with them: I said that I would see them whenever they wanted, wherever they wanted and, within reason, for as long as they wanted. I would listen to and respect their views, and would put them to the Minister even if I did not entirely agree with them. *[Interruption.]* Are not hon. Members in the House to represent the views of their constituents? Do we represent only the views with which we agree? I think that most hon. Members on both sides of the House would agree that they represent their constituents' views.

The doctors' side of the bargain was that their views would be put to me first hand, not second hand through the agitation of the old, the sick and others in need of health care. The doctors respected the deal, with the exception of one practice. I have listened to their views: I have read the report of the general medical services committee; I have made written and oral representations to my right hon. and hon. Friends. I have honoured my side of the bargain with doctors in Rochford, Rayleigh, Runwell and South Woodham Ferrers. Unfortunately, as I have said, one practice did not honour its side.

My speech has two aims. The first is to represent again the doctors with whom I struck a bargain; the second is to refute the misleading information put out by the practice to which I have referred. Let me begin by saying that it is a shame that the White Paper and the GPs' contract were allowed to be on the agenda on the same time. I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) that the contract should have been dealt with eeparately, and should have been out of the way before the White Paper came into the arena.

What did the doctors whom I saw wish me to communicate to the Health Ministers? First, on the contract side, they were worried about the targets for immunisation and cervical smears. I am delighted that there has been agreement on two levels of target, a higher payment at high percentage levels and a lower payment at lower percentage levels.

The doctors were also worried about the "face-to-face" rules, which they feared would be too bureaucratic, and about the fact that the target of 20 hours excluded home visits, which they considered unfair. I tended to agree with them about that, and I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend has amended that proposal as well.

Some senior doctors were naturally concerned that their pensions would be affected by withdrawal of seniority payments. They also made the fair point that someone who has been a GP for a long time is worth more than someone straight out of university who still has considerable experience to gather. I am pleased that, in consultations with the GPs' negotiating committee, my right hon. and learned Friend has amended that as well.

The doctors were also apprehensive about practice budgeting, which they thought might be time-consuming and complicated. They feared that it would be difficult to budget for outside patient services. I did not necessarily agree with what they said, but I promised to make their views known. They were also anxious that commercial decisions should not override medical ones—and rightly too—but they had no objection to any pay review looking at their expenditure, whether budgetary or otherwise.

Doctors and, indeed, some of my constituents are concerned about the make-up of the family practitioners committee. The doctors point out that it is proposed to include only one medical man among the 11 members. My constituents say that there will not be enough lay people on the committee: there will be far too many administrators, and it should be more evenly balanced.

Of course, some doctors were sceptical about self-budgeting hospitals. The Southend and Rochford hospitals, however, have seized the opportunity to volunteer to become self-budgeting, and are looking forward to better funding as a result.

The practice that put out false propaganda made none of its views known to me at first hand: they all came through sick and elderly people who were anxious about that false propaganda. Let me give some examples. It was claimed that GP services would be cash-limited, leading to a rationing of care. The truth is that any savings from efficiency will lead to extended care. The practice said that hospitals would be encouraged to become budget holders, whereas in fact they are to volunteer. It also said that the sum of money per patient was equivalent to an X-ray or a short course of drugs, and that if a patient needed a hysterectomy she would use up the share of the whole street in which she lived. The truth is that there will be no cut-off of funds, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle).

The practice said that doctors would receive financial incentives to ask patients to go private, and that if they did not go private, doctors would have to put them in the cheapest possible hospital. The truth is that there are very few incentives—the only incentive to go private is the tax relief for old-age pensioners—and doctors will be encouraged to send patients to the most convenient hospital with the shortest waiting list.

[Dr. Michael Clark]

The doctors say that they will be offered rewards for not treating patients, or for delaying their care. That is a gross travesty: I cannot even find the proposal in the White Paper that they have twisted. It is complete invention. They also say that the Government want GPs to become "rationers" of health care, and thus take the blame for the underfunding of the NHS, which the Government will then use as an excuse to end the Health Service as we know it. The truth is that the Government want more partnership in the NHS, and want to carry GPs with them.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take note of the points that have been properly and courteously made by the majority of doctors in my constituency, both those that I have quoted in my speech and those included in my written representations. I also hope that he will refute the scurrilous, irresponsible and unprofessional propaganda from that other practice.

9.7 pm

Ms. Jean Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I, too, am here to represent my constituents, particularly the many women among them. I am extremely pleased to have an opportunity to speak. It should be pointed out that so far no woman Member has spoken, and the concerns of women—especially the many women carers about whom we heard earlier, and who are given no information in the White Paper about the future of community care—should be put on record.

We are talking about a paving Bill. There has already been a paving Bill for the privatisation of water; now we have one to bring about—presumably following the next general election, which the Conservative party mistakenly thinks that it will win—the wholesale demolition of the National Health Service, privatisation and complete dependence on market forces.

We thought that the White Paper would deal with the crisis in the NHS. That crisis in north Staffordshire means that some of my constituents will have to wait until December 1990 for an orthopaedic out-patients appointment and there is a 30-week wait for ear, nose and throat appointments. There have been hospital closures, the Health Service uses rundown buildings and the ambulance service cannot operate within its guidelines. The area suffers from demographic changes and there is great concern about the future of community care.

It is disappointing that the White Paper addresses none of those issues. My constituents know that. Certainly the electorate in the Vale of Glamorgan know that, and I take great pleasure in welcoming my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) to the House. The GPs also know that. The GPs in north Staffordshire with whom I have spoken, including those at the Tunstall practice who called me to an urgent meeting to brief me about the debate, said that they felt disquiet about the future of the Health Service.

It is clear that in future health authorities will be brokers, handing out money for low-cost services. A letter from the north Staffordshire district sub-committee of the Staffordshire local medical committee expressed great concern about people who depend on prescriptions. The Secretary of State did not give us a categorical assurance that there will be sufficient money to cater for those people who, quite justifiably, depend on prescriptions, such as chronic asthmatics, those who suffer from cystic fibrosis, those who have severe angina and those who require dialysis. I feel strongly that, if the proposals are carried out, people who need eight or nine drugs will be paying a tax on illness, because they will have to pay more for those drugs. I noticed that the Secretary of State made no response to the intervention by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

As for the size of GPs' lists, the GPs in Tunstall told me that they will each have an extra 500 people to treat. It is quite clear that the more people there are on a GP's list, the less time there will be for minor surgery, immunisation, counselling following still births and all the essential aspects of preventive medicine. GPs who treat terminally ill patients, who require a considerable amount of time, will be penalised.

I am sponsored by COHSE, the Health Service union which has submitted detailed and responsible forecasts of how the Health Service could look in future, taking into account the need to use the present management structure to evaluate the information systems, which, together with new investment, could produce the Health Service we all require.

I know that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, so I conclude by quoting a letter from a constituent who, along with many other people, feels very strongly about the proposals. She wrote:

"I hope public apathy does not allow these proposals to be passed as I am sure that the dark days of pre National Health Service days should not be allowed to return. I do not always support all Labour party issues but I think Mrs. Thatcher is a woman completely devoid of any compassion towards those less well off members of society and the sooner she is defeated the better for the country as a whole."

The Opposition consider that there is nothing more important than the health of the people and that that should be the highest law. For that reason alone, I hope that the Government will take note of the many important points that have been raised in the debate.

9.13 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I recognise that I have only two minutes and I shall make only one brief point. The first paragraph of the final chapter of the White Paper reads:

"The proposals in the White Paper put the interests and wishes of the patient first. They offer a new, exciting and potentially rewarding challenge for all who work in the NHS. They add up to the most significant review of the NHS in its 40-year history. And they amount to a formidable programme of reform which will require energy and commitment to carry it through."

The last sentence of that paragraph strikes a particular chord, because without energy and commitment on the part of all staff, from consultant to cleaner, the patient will certainly be denied his or her best interests.

The proposals are not revolutionary, but they are certainly not a gentle touch on the tiller. They will represent a substantial change in the relationship between the patient and the GP and between the GP and the hospital service. I welcome most, if not all, of the proposed changes. As a former health authority chairman, I am all too well aware of the inertial bureaucracy of the Service over the past 15 years.

I should like to ask my right hon. and learned Friend one question. Why did he not make the White Paper a Green Paper, or at least a White Paper with very green edges? If Health Service staff and consumers had felt that

my right hon. and learned Friend was entering into genuine consultation on those far-reaching proposals, the hostility which has built up over the past three months and which has been echoed by the Opposition, would have been avoided. People who have had an input into change are much more committed by their contribution to that change, even if it is not precisely the change that they would have designed.

Even at this late stage, I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to dissipate the angst that has been created by greening up the edges of the White Paper and conceding that pilot studies in, say, two regions for a short time would strengthen the case for change and should be conceded.

My right hon. and learned Friend showed a commendable and statesmanlike willingness to compromise on the GPs' contract and achieved a result satisfactory to all of us. A demonstration of such flexibility would give credence to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State's statement to the Institute of Health Service Management that the plans contained in "Working for Patients" were not tablets of stone and that as a sensible person he was keeping his ears flapping. I trust that my right hon. and hon. Friends will keep their ears flapping.

9.15 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Conservative Members have scorned our assertions that the White Paper is about privatisation. The Secretary of State said that talk of privatisation is simply scaremongering. But it is evident that the White Paper is dripping with commitments to privatisation. GPs will be expected to use their budgets to buy private health care for their patients. District health authorities will be expected to use their budgets to buy health care in private hospitals. Opted-out hospitals will be expected to sell National Health Service treatment to private patients. Capital charges are being introduced to make NHS services more expensive compared with private health care, to drive more GPs and more district health authorities into the arms of private hospitals.

The Finance Bill contains a direct cash subsidy for private medicine, and, as my hon. friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) pointed out, even blood and ambulance services are to be sized up for privatisation. Even if the Secretary of State believes his own denials that the White Paper is about privatisation, we set no store by that. The White Paper says that it is about privatisation and the Prime Minister means it to be about privatisation. She made that perfectly clear when she said in the House on 31 January:

"those who can afford to pay for themselves should not take beds from others."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1989; Vol. 146, c. 164.]

Even if the Secretary of State has not got the Prime Minister's message, doctors, nurses and the public have.

The White Paper aims to create a two-tier Health Service. The spirit in which the Prime Minister has produced the White Paper is truly authoritarian. The Government were to propose profound changes in one of our most important institutions, but there was to be no consultation—doctors, nurses and patients were not to be consulted. Consultation was rejected because the Government believed that it would only slow things up. As the Secretary of State and his Ministers found, it was much quicker to insult people who dared to disagree.

From the outset, it was made clear that the only views to be sought were from those who could make suggestions about how the hare-brained schemes could be made to work. Counter-proposals were never allowed on the agenda and there was no Green Paper, as the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has pointed out. There are to be no pilot projects, and we have been told that those, too, would just waste time. This untried experiment is being unleashed on us with a haste that has astonished even those who credit themselves with thinking up the ideas in the first place.

The proposals are already being implemented even as we discuss the plans and long before Parliament has had time to approve them. Regions are already nominating hospitals for opting out. The London hospital has already advertised for a finance director to run it after the Secretary of State, in due course, makes his decision that it should opt out. The South East Thames regional health authority's general manager has given up his job to take up the post of running Guy's hospital, supposedly after the Secretary of State has decided to opt it out, and his salary is to be paid by a carpet millionaire, Sir Philip Harris.

Family practitioner committees are already identifying what the Government hope will be the first wave of GP budget holders. I suggest that all hon. Members obtain from their own family practitioner committees the papers drawn up to show how the proposals about GPs will work in the local area. I looked at the plans of my own family practitioner committee. They are interesting because they talk firmly about over-spending practices. The practices described as over-spending practices will be cash-limited. How are we supposed to believe that GP services will not be cash-limited if they are described by family practitioner committees as over-spending practices and when it is also mentioned that the sanction against over-spending practices will be the withholding of remuneration? If that is not a cash limit, I do not know what is. All that I have described is already happening, yet it is not until today that the Government have brought the proposals to this House for discussion.

The White Paper lays down that those who work in hospitals, still less the community that depends on those services, will have no say in opting out. The decision is to lie simply with the Secretary of State. All the talk we have heard from Conservative Members about their hospitals deciding that they will opt out is nonsense. For a start, who in the hospital has made the decision? Who has been consulted? The White Paper makes it clear anyway that the decision is to lie with the Secretary of State and with him alone.

This week, the doctors at Guy's hospital have demanded a veto over the plans for Guy's to opt out. They want to have a say in the matter before Guy's is opted out of the National Health Service. Perhaps the Minister of State will tell us later whether he will respect the demands of those doctors to have a veto, or whether he will simply ride roughshod over their views.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): In November 1987, the hon. Lady said in the House that there was nothing wrong with the NHS that a couple of hundred million pounds extra would not put right. As the Government

[Mr. John Redwood]

have put in 40 times that much in the past two years, does the hon. Lady agree that the funding problem she identified is now resolved?

Ms. Harman: No, I certainly do not agree that the funding problem we have talked about over and over again has been resolved. How can the hon. Gentleman say that the funding problem has been resolved when—[HON. MEMBERS: "You said it was."] No, we have complained constantly about the underfunding, which still causes long waiting lists. *[Interruption.]* I hope that hon. Members will listen. Forty-one per cent. of children have to wait more than six months for paediatric surgery. That is a problem of underfunding as beds are closed.

Local representation is to be struck off by local representatives being taken away from district health authorities and replaced by centrally appointed managers. The White Paper is the result of a review by closed minds behind closed doors.

In his speech today, the Secretary of State made great play of the agreement that he says exists around the stated objectives of the White Paper. It is true that his extraordinary political acumen has enabled him to recognise that every one wants better health care, but that is as far as the agreement goes. Everyone else believes that the objectives that he embraces will not be achieved by the plans in the White Paper and everyone else believes that the White Paper will frustrate attempts to improve the quality of care. The Secretary of State claims that one of his objectives is to improve the quality of care, but one of the strongest threads of criticism against the White Paper is the concern that it will undermine the quality of care.

Health authority managers, who have no medical training and never see a patient, will negotiate where to place the contract for operations, and they will place the contract where it is cheapest. They know how to count costs—that is what they have been trained to do and the reason why the Government have recruited them—but neither they nor anyone else knows accurately how to measure quality and outcome.

The internal market of competition—which, extraordinarily enough, the Secretary of State failed to mention today, although it is the core of the White Paper—for contracts between opted-out hospitals and private hospitals would put at the very heart of the system a pressure to cut costs with no countervailing safeguard to protect standards. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) rightly pointed out that, put simply, patients will be sent where treatment is cheapest, rather than where treatment is best. To compete, hospitals will have to cut costs and to cut costs, they will cut corners. When they cut corners it will cost lives.

The Government state that competition in health care will improve quality, but the opposite is the case. The more intense the competition, the worse the patient fares.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Rubbish.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman may say it is rubbish, but he should listen to some of the evidence. A study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the most authoritative medical journal, found:

"There are significant associations between higher mortality rates . . . and the intensity of competition in the market place."

Professor Alan Maynard, who is the director of the Centre for Health Economics at York, which is a designated research establishment for the Department of Health, followed up that point by saying:

"The risk with competition . . . is that inferior patient outcomes may result."

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Lady said that she wanted some evidence. I am sorry to keep harping on about it, but the South Glamorgan health authority has contracted out all its——

Ms. Harman *rose*——

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Lady gave way. Perhaps she will be courteous enough to allow me to finish the point. I am not aware of any rules of procedure that allow anyone but you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to stop me. With the greatest respect, I shall finish my point. South Glamorgan health authority has contracted out all its open heart surgery to a private hospital in Southampton, which means that patients are moved to hospitals where their open heart surgery is dealt with quickly. It does not cost them a penny and the South Glamorgan health authority——

Hon. Members: Is this a speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Hayes: I was trying to make a brief intervention but the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) would not——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Ms. Harman.

Ms. Harman: That intervention was a total waste of time. I obviously have a particular affect on the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), as he made exactly the same intervention in my last speech. I hope that in my next speech he will restrain himself.

The point is that the Government will not listen to any evidence about the destructive effects of competition because it does not fit in with their dogmatic allegiance to the free market. We should be encouraging co-operation between hospitals, not competition.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Lady to mislead the House by saying that the Secretary of State——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady is not alleging that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) is deliberately misleading the House. If she is, she must withdraw.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am suggesting that the hon. Lady did not listen and therefore did not hear the Secretary of State refer to the internal market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In that case, it is not a point of order.

Ms. Harman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not think that is was a point of order; I could not tell what it was.

On the point about quality, perhaps we need look no further than private nursing homes. We shall then see how the quality of care suffers when there is an attempt to keep profits up. The Government have already privatised nursing homes—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Southwark?"] I shall tell hon. Members about Southwark.

The point about Nye Bevan lodge and Southwark invites a comparison between the council's response in that case and the Government's response to the numerous scandals of abuse, ill-treatment and neglect in private nursing homes. Southwark council learned hard lessons and was very concerned; it acted with the Department of Health to try to ensure that it never happened again. The Government, on the other hand, have evidence before them but take no account of it.

Let me remind the Government of some of that evidence. They have privatised nursing care without the consent of the House by shutting geriatric wards and cottage hospitals and providing a bottomless pit of social security subsidies to the private nursing sector. The Government are totally unconcerned about cruelty and neglect in those nursing homes because they are businesses, and the Government look only at the health of the bank balance, never at the health of the patient.

Take, for example, the private Old Rectory nursing home in Northampton. Patients there were assaulted, intimidated, taunted, tied into beds and chairs and left unsupervised. Staff levels were inadequate and prescriptions were altered.

Take the private Old Dairy nursing home in Enfield, where eight heavily dependent patients were routinely left completely on their own with no staff to look after them. And take the private nursing home near Colchester, where a 14-year-old girl doing a holiday job had to insert catheters in elderly women.

These cases are not isolated examples; they are the tip of the iceberg. Yet the Government have done nothing about it. They have not acted on the recommendations of the registered homes tribunals. They do not give district health authorities enough resources to police the private nursing homes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It was this Government who introduced legislation giving the health authorities the power to supervise the private homes sector and, if necessary, to refuse licences. We were concerned about allegations of low standards and gave local authorities, in the case of residential homes, and health authorities, in the case of nursing homes, legal powers that they have never had before so that they could license homes or decide not to license them. The complaint to which the hon. Lady referred should now be taken up with the authorities to which we have given these important powers.

Ms. Harman: The Government set up the registered homes tribunals but they file their decisions in the basement of the Department of Health. They never look at the recommendations made by the tribunals, which say that things are going badly wrong in the private nursing home sector. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot just shake his head, because even the private Registered Nursing Home Association has said that it is concerned about what it describes as "the cowboy element" in the industry.

The White Paper is a charter for that cowboy element to move into our hospital services. The Secretary of State has claimed that one of his objectives is to increase choice in health care. Under this White Paper, patients' choice will be restricted rather than widened.

I challenge the Minister to respond to my next point; he has not done so in the past. Where is the choice for the patient who is told that he can no longer go to his local hospital because the Secretary of State has opted it out and it has dropped the services that he needs? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said, where is the choice for the chronically ill patient who cannot get the GP of his choice because the GP thinks that he cannot afford it under the practice budget cash limits? Where is the choice for the patient who wants to get a second opinion but whose GP is reluctant to authorise it because he is getting to the end of the financial year? Where is the choice for the patient who is told that he must go to the hospital picked by the DHA manager? Where is the choice for the patient who must go to the hospital where the GP placed the contract at the beginning of the year?

Certainly there are choices in the White Paper, but they are not choices for patients or doctors. The choices in the White Paper are for managers and accountants. The choices that they will make are cheap, cheaper and cheaper still.

Inequalities will occur in the Health Service at primary care level also as patients rally round GPs who have had their budgets cash-limited and make voluntary contributions into their health centres and local GP practices. As a result, inequalities in health care will increase. The Secretary of State has engaged in the bogus argument that everyone who objects to the White Paper is in favour of the status quo. That is absolute nonsense. The Health Service is buzzing with ideas for improving care and finding new ways of delivering services. There is no shortage of ideas in the Health Service, but there is a shortage of cash. There is also a shortage of preparedness on the part of the Government to listen to the ideas that are coming out of the Health Service. The Government are frightened of those ideas because they are frightened that they might have to invest in them.

It is nonsense to say that Labour has no alternative proposal. Unlike the Government, Opposition Members have consulted patients, doctors and nurses. Unlike the Government, we have emphasised the basic necessity of increasing resources. Unlike the Government, we have a programme for making a reality of community care. We want to see a localisation of services to make access easier. We want to see the integration of acute and community services so that services fit the patient, rather than the other way round. *[Interruption.]* It is Conservative Members' fault if the Secretary of State is complaining about the time. He cannot go forward with his proposals because the public are blocking his way, and he cannot go backward with them because the Prime Minister is blocking his way. I predict that he will need to seek treatment in the John Moore memorial hospital.

The Prime Minister predicted that she would achieve victory in the Vale of Glamorgan. I am happy to welcome my new hon. Friend the Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), and I congratulate him on his excellent maiden speech.

The Prime Minister has done a remarkable thing with the White Paper. She has forced the nation to re-examine its values. That re-examination has reinforced those values, and this White Paper affronts them. The Prime Minister has finally gone too far. Whatever will happen in the vote tonight, the Government have lost. People realise that the real change that the Health Service needs is a change of Government.

9.38 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): I add to the welter of tributes that have been paid to the maiden speech by the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith). It was a most graceful speech that was exceptionally well received by hon. Members. From that performance, the hon. Gentleman has won himself many friends in the House, and I wish him well in his career in the House.

Exactly a week ago, my right hon. and learned Friend was able to reach an agreement with the representatives of the General Medical Services Committee about the GPs' contract. That agreement reflected a willingness on the part of the negotiators to accept a performance-related contract that will make it much easier for the National Health Service—the primary care system that we depend on so much—to become much more comprehensive and to add several important stimuli to good performance, not least the move to a 60 per cent. capitation level.

It also reflects a willingness on the part of the Government to make some changes to the contract that was originally proposed. I shall not list those changes, but they pertain to important matters, such as the retention of seniority payments and a reduction in some of the target levels set for vaccinations and cervical smears. That, too, reflects a willingness on the part of the Government to listen to what was said either directly to us by doctors or by the representations that were made by hon. Members following meetings that they had had with general practitioners in their constituencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that he hoped we would keep our ears flapping. That evidence has shown that we do flap our ears and that we shall continue to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said that he had met members of every practice in his constituency and that he had sent us representations. He did not propagandise about the proposals, but he joined many colleagues in sending us practical suggestions on how the contract should be improved. We have read, learnt and inwardly digested their points, and I hope that all those who have played a part in the process will have felt that it was worth while after the happy outcome of last week.

That is the way in which we will continue the task of implementing the White Paper. Of course, the White Paper sets a framework—which it is the duty of the Government to provide—for the future of this vital national institution. However, a great deal of the detail remains to be worked through following the lead given in the working papers. We welcome even critical contributions—provided that they are not empty attempts to do away with the debate—if they are genuine responses on the practicalities of schemes that in the end will be tested and judged by their practicality. In implementing the White Paper, we are looking for a phased implementation of those ideas. I say that especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe). Every opportunity will be taken to look at what experience teaches us about those initiatives, so that others who come along behind can be influenced and, if necessary, adjustments can be made.

It is a crucial starting point in the debate to ask what has happened to the National Health Service over the past 15 or 20 years. As Aneurin Bevan said, "Why look in the crystal ball, when you can read the book?" It is important before we start to look to the future—especially some of the things that Opposition Members have said about the future—that we look at what has happened in the past. I do not want to dwell on what happened in the 1970s, but we know that there were years, such as 1977-78, when there was a fall in NHS funding. Overall, during the years of the last Labour Goverment, there was a fall in the proportion of the gross domestic product that went on the National Health Service. We know that there was a cut of 33 per cent. in capital spend on the NHS during those periods.

Every hon. Member will have a similar story to tell about a hospital in their areas, but almost every year of this decade since the Government were elected, more than £1 million has been spent on capital improvements, such as new operating theatres and a new burns unit in the Queen Mary's hospital, Roehampton, which is in my constituency. In the last year of the Labour Government, £35,000 was spent on capital improvements at that hospital.

One of the extraordinary things about the speeches that we have heard from members of the Labour party today is that they have not contained one word of apology or explanation for what happened during those dismal years. Never was the National Health Service less safe in a Government's hands than it was when the Opposition were in power. Following a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth, we have not heard a word of explanation of what would have been the consequences for the NHS in the 1980s if the economic policies of the Opposition in the 1970s had been pursued. What we know is that, if the NHS had been funded at the same level at which they left it, we would have been spending £18·5 billion on the NHS this year, instead of £26 billion. That is the difference between a Conservative and a Labour Government.

However, when one looks at what has happened in the 1980s, one finds a sharp contrast. Expenditure has tripled in money terms and has increased by 40 per cent. in real terms. About 1·5 million more in-patients are being treated and 3·5 million more out-patients. We have tens of thousands more medical staff and they are much better paid. A nursing sister who was paid £96 per week at the top of her scale in 1979 is now paid over £300 per week under this Government. We are beginning to reach a level where we need not be ashamed of what we pay our nurses.

In primary care, we have 20 per cent. more general practitioners, 20 per cent. more dentists and 50 per cent. more support staff. It is no wonder that the size of the average patient list has decreased. It is no wonder that, for the first time in this decade, we can move into preventive medicine. It is over 70 years since the first health committee recommended that we should have preventive medicine in this country.

When one considers the capital size of the equation, one sees much more starkly what benefits the wise and prudent financial management of this decade has brought the NHS. We have a forward programme of NHS capital building of over £4 billion, and 500 projects of over £1 million each are either being built or are rolling forward. What a difference from when the Labour party was in power.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) pointed out how well the NHS has coped with the many tragedies

that have taken place in the past 12 to 18 months. Sadly, however, he turned that into a point of criticism as if the facilities in those hospitals had been tried and found wanting. Far from it—he knows that the unfortunate people who were injured in the Clapham incident, the disaster in the borough for which I am a Member of Parliament, were taken to a brand new accident and emergency unit which had been opened only the week before in one of the largest new hospitals in Europe. Indeed, that hospital will soon have the largest medical school in Europe. That would not have been possible with the 33 per cent. cut in capital programmes that we had under the Labour Government. In their last year in office, they spent just over £300 million in capital spend. This year we expect to spend over £1 billion and perhaps as much as £1·2 billion.

That is not happening just because more money is coming from the Treasury. It is coming about because of better management and because what the Opposition sneer at as commercial principles have been brought to bear on the NHS. In their last year in office, under £10 million-worth of NHS property was sold; this year we expect to sell nearly £300 million-worth of redundant land. That money will not go into the Chief Secretary's back pocket, but into further new building for tomorrow's NHS.

Mr. Morgan: It is evident that if tub-thumping were the same as health care, we would indeed have been doing well under this Government. However, if what the Minister has just said is correct, can he explain why a fortnight ago Gordon Harrhy, the general manager of the health authority in South Glamorgan, when attempting to explain why he has to close the children's ward in the Prince of Wales hospital in my constituency, said, "Although the Government go around saying that more money is being put into the Health Service, I can tell you" —he was talking to the audience of Radio Wales—"as a manager of the largest health authority in Wales but one, that we have actually had less money every year."

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible to have less money every year—*[Interruption.]*—because in every year, both in cash terms and in real terms the money allocated to the NHS has increased.

The hon. Gentleman has touched on a point to which I am coming. It is said for those people who come to such debates—there are far too many among the Opposition —who simply say that a large cheque or an additional sum of money is what is needed. The reality, and one of the driving forces of the White Paper, is that, even with an expanding health budget, one must still be super-efficient to cope with the increasing demand being placed on the Service. That is why it is such nonsense for the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) to say, as she always says, that at any given point in time we need a certain amount more money, because even if that amount is put into the Service, the problems are just as great as they were before, for all the reasons that I am about to come to.

Back in 1976 when the British Medical Association was abusing the Labour Government even more lustily than it is abusing us, a BMA spokesman said that the NHS needed an extra £2 billion. Since that time, the NHS has received an extra £20 billion, but it still faces difficulties, because of demographic pressure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) rather charmingly said, it is due to the increased shelf life of the oldies. I think that he included himself in that memorable phrase. Demographics means that an aging population will obviously require more intensive health care.

Other reasons for the difficulties include medical advances and the greatly improved capability of the Health Service to deal with many conditions that were not treatable years ago and the increased expectations of people who want operations for conditions such as hernias and varicose veins, which used not to be treated operatively years ago. There is also a call for preventive strategies. We do not have to provide a service merely for the sick but look after those who may think that they are well, but who are not. Such people may have a problem, perhaps breast cancer or cervical cancer, of which they are unaware. However, if they are screened properly, the condition will not only be picked up, but will be cured. Those are the improvements that we are seeking.

If the NHS is to cope with the pressures of the next decade, it has no choice but to change. I shall pick up two points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar in a most compelling speech. There was no answer from the Opposition to his question: why should the NHS be the only institution that does not have to change? The people who care about the NHS are those who want it not to be a mausoleum but to move with the times. It is not a monument to some past era of Socialist domination but a living, vital part of a modern community and must be treated as such.

The White Paper seeks to establish three basic principles: first, the need for more consistent quality in the NHS; secondly, that the NHS should be more responsive to its patients; thirdly, that it should offer value for money. Value for money is a concept that has been sneered at monotonously by Opposition Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) presented a clear and compelling example of why value for money matters —that of his own local hospital, Stepping Hill in Stockport, on which it is worth dwelling for a moment or two.

There are 11 hospitals in the north-western region that treat over 20,000 cases a year. The figures for 1986-87 show that Stepping Hill hospital treated 29,000 patients at an average cost of £605 per patient. In the other ten hospitals, the average cost per patient was between £630 and £1,107. However, Stepping Hill hospital offers an excellent service to my hon. Friend's constituents.

The question that must be asked when considering the problems in the NHS is whether the hospitals that are charging the taxpayer 50 per cent. more to carry out the same procedures offer a better service or merely charge more.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that Stepping Hill hospital does not have an accident department, and that therefore its costs are distorted? It would be helpful if we had the money for a first-class accident department in Stockport.

Mr. Mellor: I certainly take seriously the hon. Gentleman's comment, but he is wrong to think that the lack of an accident department influences the figures. I am sorry that he feels that, in the interests of defending his ideology, he has to sneer at the local hospital that looks after his constituents so well. That hospital is efficient and

[Mr. Mellor]

effective, and it also offers value for money for the NHS. That means that it can treat more patients. The NHS will never have anything but finite resources, so the less the unit cost of treating patients, the more patients can be treated. That is a fundamental point.

The problem with the Labour party was well pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth, who made it clear that, entertaining though the speech by the hon. Member for Livingston was, he completely wasted the opportunity to come to grips with the problems that the NHS faces and to set out what the Labour party would do about them. We are willing to defend our policies, but it would be interesting to know one day what the Opposition's policies are. I know that the hon. Member for Livingston will not tell us, but I am sure that he will not mind us basing our information on leaked documents which appeared in *The Independent*. The section on health has a strong flavour of the Government's White Paper—there is plenty of emphasis on quality. It seems that health authorities will be repaid

"for the work they do",

which would appear to be a description of an internal market. What is missing is any way of bringing an internal market about.

Ms. Harman *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: The document is full of references to preventive medicine, with no suggestions of how to bring it about. The Opposition want preventive medicine but they abuse the contract which is the only way of requiring general practitioners to practise it——

Ms. Harman: Hospitals being paid for how much work they do is a reference in our document not to the internal market but to activity-based budgeting. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Mellor: That is illiteracy. One must be able to cost the activities before starting to budget for them.

The hon. Lady is on much safer ground when coming out with the old claptrap in the policy document about private practice, or saving the unions' bacon by not allowing competitive tendering, or about having health authorities that would consist of representatives of local government, health workers and voluntary agencies—so Southwark council, after the triumph of Nye Bevan lodge, would also run the local health service——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: In the time that remains, I should like to turn to some of the constructive points that have been raised. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) is very concerned about self-governing hospitals.

The expressions of interest in self-governing status are a sign that, whatever hostilities may exist towards the White Paper in some circles, people at the grass roots are recognising the opportunities that the White Paper offers. After all, many of our great hospitals were organised as self-governing hospitals before 1974. Self-governance represents the freedom of action that special health authorities already have.

The Secretary of State will determine, after representations, whether hospitals should be self-governing; he will examine the credibility of the plans put to him. We hope that they will succeed. There will be a phased implementation. Some hospitals will volunteer to come in, others will not initially, although no doubt they will when the scheme becomes a success. I guess that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster is particularly concerned to know whether, if a self-governing hospital does not work out, it can withdraw and return to its previous status within the NHS. There is no question of any hospital being outside the NHS—so suggestions to the contrary are spurious.

There will be no cash limits on what general practitioners may prescribe for patients—they can prescribe whatever they want—but they will have to justify their prescribing practices to show whether they are over-prescribing or prescribing over-expensive brands of drugs instead of generic alternatives. What business would ignore £2 billion of costs and allow those who spend the money to be wholly oblivious of value for money?

In the end, the ideas in the White Paper are far too serious to be treated with the derision that the Opposition direct at them. To describe what the White Paper sets out to do I can do no better than quote a document which says, referring to the White Paper:

"The programme seeks to preserve the basic principles on which the NHS was founded and to tackle its weaknesses through a series of incremental and imaginative reforms. These reforms centre on the introduction of incentives to doctors and hospitals to provide services that are more responsive to patients. In tandem, competition between providers will be used to stimulate greater efficiency in the use of resources."

Those flashing insights come from *Marxism Today*. What better commendation to shatter the Opposition? I urge my colleagues to support the White Paper in the Division Lobby.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 184, Noes 253.

Division No. 196] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Cartwright, John
Allen, Graham	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Anderson, Donald	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Clay, Bob
Armstrong, Hilary	Clelland, David
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Ashton, Joe	Cohen, Harry
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Corbett, Robin
Barron, Kevin	Cousins, Jim
Battle, John	Cryer, Bob
Beckett, Margaret	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Beith, A. J.	Darling, Alistair
Bell, Stuart	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Dixon, Don
Bidwell, Sydney	Dobson, Frank
Blair, Tony	Doran, Frank
Blunkett, David	Duffy, A. E. P.
Boateng, Paul	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Bradley, Keith	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Fatchett, Derek
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Fearn, Ronald
Buckley, George J.	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Caborn, Richard	Fisher, Mark
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Flannery, Martin
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Flynn, Paul
Canavan, Dennis	Foot, Rt Hon Michael

Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory and Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 179.

Division No. 187] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heyhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the programme of reform of the National Health Service set out in the White Paper, Working for Patients (Cm. 555), and the reaffirmation of the basic principles of the National Health Service which will continue to be available to all, regardless of income and financed mainly out of taxation; and believes that the proposals in the White Paper will raise the standards of all of the health service to the high standard of the best and will lead to an extension of patient choice, a more responsive health service, better value for money and an even better standard of health care for the decade to come.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Road Traffic

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 21st April, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents.)

Pesticides Residues

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 6092/1/89 relating to pesticide residues and of the Government's intention to negotiate a satisfactory system to set Community levels that will both strengthen the protection of consumer health and facilitate intra-Community trade.

Batteries and Accumulators

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 10470/88 relating to batteries and accumulators containing dangerous substances; and endorses the Government's support of the proposal's aim of reducing pollution from these materials while ensuring that methods of achieving this do not create barriers to trade within the Community.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

Coal Mining (Subsidence)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): For the past three months in this place I have been either standing or sitting looking at the same Minister who is sitting opposite me tonight. I think that he knows something about the problem that I have brought to the House on behalf of my constituents. The Minister himself assures me that he knows something about pit mining. In fact, I understand that 10 or 11 years ago he made a visit to Easington—and went underground, I believe. He found out something about the mining industry.

Like some of us who have worked in the pit for many years—35 years in my case—the Minister probably knows that when the coal is taken out the land falls all the way from the top, and that if there are properties on the top they will be damaged. That is the problem that I want to discuss with the Minister tonight. Many of those properties—hundreds upon hundreds in my constituency alone, never mind the other mining areas—have suffered severe damage.

What has been happening? The National Coal Board, which now calls itself British Coal, has been telling many people in my constituency and others that they are to receive nothing for compensation or repairs. That is a shocking state of affairs. But the Minister sits there and allows it to go on and on, and when we raise it with him he does nothing about it.

What did the Government do? They brought in Ian MacGregor as chairman of the National Coal Board. And what was he told? He was told that the industry must break even and then go into profit. So he started to have a look at the books, and what did he find? He found substantial subsidence problems, meaning that a fair amount of money had to be found for compensation and repairs. What did he find in Nottinghamshire? He found that people there were allowed to claim for compensation or repairs 12 years after mining had ceased underneath any property.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The Minister is sitting there doodling.

Mr. Haynes: But I hope that he is listening. He used not to listen in Committee. We got nothing from him on the Electricity Bill, but I hope that we will get something tonight, because we are in desperate need. Let me tell the Minister that when we kick his lot out next time my Government will do something for these people.

MacGregor found that that 12-year period was six years in statute, so he shortened it to six years to save money because of the pressure from the Government for the industry to break even and then make a profit. When he shortened it to six years, he left out people who had a genuine claim for damage to their properties.

The Government encourage people to own their own properties, but people get nothing when their properties are damaged by the mining industry. The Minister is not prepared to tell British Coal what it should do for people with that problem living in my constituency and other constituencies.

The present general secretary of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers in Nottinghamshire has been

saying that the cost of compensation and repairs is closing pits. He can afford to say that because he has had his property repaired and it now looks beautiful. He can come off it. He has had his share, but he is not bothered about anyone else. I am speaking on behalf of my constituents, so I am looking forward to hearing something from the Minister tonight. He knows about the Waddilove report. When that report was published, the Secretary of State sat on it for a year and did not bring it to the House, for the simple reason that it said that complainants had a genuine case and were not receiving fair treatment. The Government then issued a White Paper and promised to produce a Bill. We are still waiting for that Bill. We are waiting to see what the Government propose to do about the problem.

Ashfield and Mansfield district councils realised that mining subsidence had caused serious problems in the beautiful county of Nottinghamshire, and, in the same way as the Government have sent out leaflets about the poll tax, put a leaflet through every door in Ashfield and Mansfield to find out the exact extent of the problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) is in his place and hopes to take part in the debate. In Mansfield, 12,000 people responded to the leaflet from the district councils to say that they had problems with mining subsidence and that British Coal was doing nothing about it.

In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) 2,000 properties had been damaged by mining subsidence. In Chesterfield, a little further down the road in Derbyshire, a further 2,000 properties had been damaged. The numbers are increasing and we want something to be done about the serious problem that those people face.

The hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) is not here. His father used to be a Minister at the Department of Transport and 3,000 properties in his constituency were damaged by mining subsidence. The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) usually sits on the Conservative Back Benches sniping at the Derbyshire county council, yet 2,700 properties in his constituency have been damaged by mining subsidence. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has 1,100 such properties in his constituency. It is surprising that none of those Conservative Members have mentioned the subject in the House.

My colleagues and I have been constantly badgering the Minister and the Secretary of State for Energy, when he is in the country, so we are really looking for some action. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has stayed to listen to the debate. He does not often remain here into the early hours of the morning as you and I do, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr Dixon), the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster), the Opposition Chief Whip, are often here. The Doorkeepers and *Hansard* are always here. They are a good staff and they look after us. Having made that point, I turn to my constituency of Ashfield.

There are 8,250 properties affected in my constituency and we are constantly told that there is no hope of getting anything done. We are told that we are out of time. If British Coal offers any compensation, the money is spent on the property, but by the time the money is spent, only half the work has been done. The compensation is nowhere enough. It is cut here, cut there and cut everywhere and that is a result of the Government's policy towards coal mining.

The Government must live up to their responsibilities. They are responsible for the coal mining industry, which is a public industry. There is plenty of it in my constituency and other mining areas. We have this massive problem to deal with and there is no doubt that it is important. I get letters and representations at my surgeries and I am sick to death of people coming to see me and my having to tell them that the Minister is not prepared to do anything about it. I hope that he will help us tonight.

You often come to Nottinghamshire, Mr. Speaker, and you have told me about the wonderful visits you have made. Supposing that when you retire—and I hope that that is a long way off—you decide to move away from the metropolis to that beautiful county up there and buy a property. You would have to be very careful when you looked over the property to be sure that it was not affected by mining subsidence. You could be taken for a ride unless you knew that. I hope that in your retirement, Mr. Speaker, you do come that way so that we see each other regularly as we do here.

The problem is serious. I hope that we will get something done about it and I beg the Minister to come over to my constituents. They do not all vote for me, because 18,000 voted Conservative at the last election. The Minister must consider that seriously. When constituents come to me and tell me whether they voted Labour or Conservative, I have to tell them that it makes no difference. Once a Member of Parliament is elected, if a constituent has a problem, he does his utmost to deal with it, which is what I am doing tonight. People of all political colours in my constituency have this problem. I am looking for some help from the Minister tonight.

10.37 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on his continued sterling efforts on behalf of his constituents; I know that he serves them well in this Chamber.

I want to add a couple of points. On the latest surveys, in the north Nottinghamshire area, the problem is considerably worse than my hon. Friend has described. In the Mansfield and Ashfield area alone, there are at least 25,000 properties damaged through coal mining subsidence. If one considers the other areas covered by the survey, which was carried out by Trent polytechnic in Nottingham, one can see that there are at least 35,000 damaged properties.

We want some positive action and direction from the Minister. The chief executives from a consortium of local authorities are hoping to come to London in late June to present to the Minister the register of damaged properties found in the survey and I know that the Minister has said that he would be prepared to meet them. In November, the same group is holding a seminar in the north Nottinghamshire area, at a venue yet to be decided. All the authorities will be represented, with the relevant Members of Parliament and, we hope, British Coal, to try to map out some solution to this enormous problem.

There are 25,000 damaged homes in two small district council areas and in my area, of 18,000 returns to a questionnaire put through doors, over 14,000 showed damaged properties. Schools and hospitals have had to

[Mr. Alan Meale]

close in my constituency and there are thousands of damaged homes. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield pointed out, not all the people affected voted Labour at the last general election. A substantial proportion of the electorate in my constituency voted Conservative. With a majority of 56, I hold one of the smallest majorities in the House. More than 19,000 people voted Conservative in my constituency and many of them live in damaged properties.

I shall be grateful if the Minister will answer some of my questions.

10.40 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) My constituency does not have the same mining subsidence problems as those described by my hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). There have been a number of serious problems in the past, however, in the Hartington area in Staveley. Massive problems have arisen and people have felt that they are being bounced back and forth between agents and the board and have been unable to solve their compensation problems.

We need legislation to deal with problems that arise in future. The Staveley area, for example, is likely to have massive subsidence problems. When will the Government introduce legislation based on the Waddilove report, or reflecting the two Bills introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield? Even if primary legislation is not forthcoming, some measures could be introduced. For instance, if you, Mr. Speaker, decided to move to Nottinghamshire and buy a property, would plans of advanced working be available to his surveyors and others? We need local arbitration for disputes, and planning permission should be required for new areas. Moreover, people ought to be able to use their own contractors rather than always having to act through the agents. It seems to me that those aims could be achieved under existing legislation, perhaps by the introduction of statutory instruments.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) got one thing wrong in his fluent speech. It was not 11 but 23 years ago, in 1966, that I had the honour of fighting Emmanuel Shinwell in the constituency of Easington. That was the first occasion on which I had direct knowledge of the undoubtedly distressing problem of subsidence.

The hon. Gentleman got another, much more important, thing wrong when he completely misinformed the House about the assiduous efforts of my hon. Friends the Members for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on behalf of their constituents. I know about that, because I am on the receiving end of their complaints.

Mr. Haynes: But they are not here.

Mr. Spicer: Nevertheless, my hon. Friends are assiduous in their efforts. It is the hon. Gentleman's Adjournment debate and he has quite properly brought the matter before the House but it is quite wrong of him to cast aspersions on my hon. Friends, who fight hard for their constituents on this matter.

Let me say a word to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) before I address myself to the speech of the hon. Member for Ashfield. I shall seriously consider meeting the delegation to which he referred, particularly if it is accompanied by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He also asked me about the November meeting. I look forward to receiving the formal invitation and, while I cannot commit myself fully so far in advance, I shall certainly attend if I can.

The hon. Member for Ashfield has quite properly raised the question of coal mining subsidence. I understand his concern and have every sympathy with those who have experienced damage to their homes from subsidence.

Mr. Haynes: What does that mean?

Mr. Spicer: I shall come to what it means in a moment, but I think that it is worth starting with an expression of sympathy. That is totally fair.

I do not think that the hon. Member for Ashfield will deny that subsidence is an inevitable consequence of modern deep mining techniques. The very real problems associated with it will therefore remain as long as there is a coal industry, which—contrary to what Opposition Members sometimes say—I predict will be for a very long time indeed. The question which the hon. Member for Ashfield properly addressed is how to ensure that those affected by subsidence get a fair deal. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the issue was addressed in some detail by the Waddilove committee. The committee's report recognised that a balance has to be struck between the interests of the people living in a coal mining area and the needs of an economic coal industry to which his hon. Friends often refer.

Although Waddilove concluded that the system for compensation and repair had its shortcomings, it did not call for radical revision or overhaul. However, it identified a number of areas where improvements could be made, and the process of implementation has already begun. As I stated in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock) on 12 January this year, British Coal has already implemented over half the Waddilove committee's 65 recommendations.

A number of important changes are therefore already in place. For example, British Coal has improved its public notification procedures and now publishes in local newspapers mining locations over the previous and next 12 months. It is committed to a good standard of repair in all cases of subsidence, even though the Coal-Mining (Subsidence) Act 1957 only requires it to make the property "reasonably fit" for use. Claimants are also able to use their own contractors for the repair of subsidence damage.

The Waddilove report recommended that British Coal should provide the Secretary of State for Energy with an annual report on the administration of the subsidence compensation and repair system in the previous year. The first such report was placed in the House of Commons Library towards the end of last year. It shows that both the number of new claims and the total numbers of claims outstanding are on the way down. In 1983-84 there were

52,000 claims outstanding; in 1986-87 the figure was 36,000, and the report shows that by last year it had fallen to 31,000.

I fully concede that that is still more than one would wish to see, but British Coal is making progress and the downward trend is clear. In part this may have been achieved by a general shift of mining away from built-up areas. It is also due to British Coal taking greater account of subsidence damage in the mine planning process and putting additional resources into the administration of claims. It is inevitable, however, that a system which deals with around 12,000 new claims a year will produce some cases where people are dissatisfied. I am always concerned, as the hon. Gentleman is, to hear of these.

Nor must the costs of subsidence damage be forgotten. We have to see the matter in perspective. Last year alone, compensation and repairs arising from subsidence damage cost British Coal £49 million; that is what it paid out. British Coal now includes subsidence in the costing of all proposed underground workings. In extreme cases, pits can be closed if the subsidence costs associated with extracting the coal are unacceptably high.

Despite the improvements, the present system has its shortcomings and we accept that more remains to be done. In our response to Waddilove, we said that we would consider legislation in a number of areas. Last April, we issued a consultation document setting out our proposals. These will result in significant improvements to the present system.

For example, we propose increasing the time limits for making a claim. This will mean that a claimant will be able to submit a claim either six years from the occurrence of the damage or three years from when the damage first becomes apparent, subject to an absolute limit of 15 years. An important point is that, during that period, the onus is on British Coal to prove that damage was not caused by subsidence. That would ensure that claimants will not lose their right to make a claim merely because the damage has taken some time to become apparent.

The Government share the Waddilove report's view —and the views expressed by the hon. Member for Ashfield—that the public interest is best met by a system for dealing with subsidence damage which puts the emphasis on repairs rather than on compensation. We therefore propose introducing for the first time a provision whereby the primary duty of British Coal will be to repair damage. We also propose that, in future, property and land damaged by subsidence should be restored to is pre-damaged state as far as reasonably practicable.

We further intend to extend British Coal's liability for certain expenses and damage. For example, British Coal's code of practice will be brought into statute. That will mean that compensation for damage to chattels, house or farm loss, depreciation of crops, tilt and other structural distortion will all now have a firm statutory basis for the first time. We will also extend British Coal's liability by putting certain incidental expenses incurred by claimants on a statutory footing. That could include such matters as cost of removal and storage of furniture, cleaning costs, transport costs and loss of earnings.

Residual loss of property value is likely to occur only in a small minority of cases. Our proposed new standard of repair should reduce the number still further. British Coal will continue to compensate where there remains an indentifiable material and physical change in the condition of a property following subsidence damage and repair—for example, tilt and other structural distortion—and where it can be demonstrated that the change has materially reduced the value of the property. Those provisions are presently included in the code of practice which we have proposed should be incorporated into statute. However, given the variety of factors that can affect the values of property, it would be difficult to identify and to assess properly permanent loss in value.

Waddilove concluded that the Lands Tribunal was the most appropriate body to consider appeals on mining subsidence damage, and the Government agree with that conclusion. In responding to all claims, British Coal informs claimants of the possibility of an appeal to the Lands Tribunal or independent adjudication. British Coal will make every effort to reach an amicable agreement but, if disputes arise, independent adjudication offers a potentially cheaper and simpler solution to straightforward disputes than references to the Lands Tribunal.

Mr. Meale: I understand the situation, because I have read the literature and I have heard the hon. Gentleman's statements previously. However, has the hon. Gentleman made any sort of bid to the Treasury or the Cabinet, for the next financial year, so that we can get on with some of the proposed legislation?

Mr. Spicer: I shall have something to say about legislation in a moment.

British Coal will recommend references to the Lands Tribunal or independent adjudication in certain cases—for example, in disputes over valuation of property or the choice of a method of repair. However, in cases requiring significant legal input or involving more than one issue, direct reference to the Lands Tribunal is likely to be more appropriate.

We have received over 50 responses to the proposals included in the consultation paper. There have, of course, been a number of criticisms and further suggestions but, broadly speaking, our proposals have been well received.

We have carefully considered the points now raised and our proposals are now virtually finalised. In direct answer to the hon. Member for Mansfield, I can tell him that we will legislate on them when parliamentary time allows us to do so. On that basis, I hope that the hon. Member for Ashfield, who properly raised the issue before the House, will feel confident that the matter is being addressed with the utmost seriousness by the Government, with legislation firmly in mind.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 12 May 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Active Citizenship

9.34 am

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I beg to move,

That this House confirms its commitment to the role of the active citizen and voluntary organisations in society.

It gives me great pleasure to continue to develop the theme that I chose for my maiden speech. I do not claim any special expertise in the subject; indeed, I see hon. Members on both sides of the House who have greater experience then I, both generally and in some of the more specific subjects that I shall touch on in my introductory remarks. I look forward to hearing their contributions.

The concept of active citizenship is hardly a new one. Throughout the ages, societies have progressed and prospered precisely because their members worked for the common good. However, the phrase has entered the political arena only in the past three years or so, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is to reply to the debate, have both spoken, during their tenure of office, of the importance of citizens involving themselves in their communities—the emphasis being on communities rather than on the more impersonal and intangible concept of society. The affection of the public tends towards Edmund Burke's idea of "little platoons"—representing the best of Whig and Tory traditions—as opposed to great battalions.

Why the phrase "active citizenship"? It is precisely to distinguish the concept from passive citizenship, if citizenship it is, whereby responsibilities have tended to be ceded to the state. It is not just east of the iron curtain that the destruction of communities in the second world war led directly to the heyday of Socialist planners. The heartless tower blocks—the ghastly stark architecture and all that goes with it—also appeared in the West. These horrors are only now beginning to be knocked down and transformed. Active citizenship means more than simply casting a vote or writing a cheque—whether to the taxman for the state to provide, or to charity, to absolve one's conscience without further obligation.

The motion seeks to raise awareness of the vital role of the active citizen, both as an individual and joining others in voluntary groups to help the community generally. All the trends are now towards people taking greater responsibility for themselves and their families—in housing, through tenants' and housing associations; in education, through parent governors of schools, and, in health, through volunteers in hospitals, the local identity of which, I trust, will be enhanced by the proposals for self-governing hospitals. All that has been added to more traditional themes—lay magistrates drawn from all walks of life, youth club leaders, scouts, guides, St. John Ambulance, lifeboat men or simply membership of clubs and organisations with a charitable element. The desire to belong and the need to be needed are powerful human traits. As Abraham Lincoln reminded us, service to others is the rent that we pay for our place on earth.

It is all too easy, after a decade of major changes, with the emphasis rightly on enterprise and efficiency, for critics to portray an essentially materialistic society. Although I believe that to be unjust—all hon. Members can testify to the superb and inadequately recognised voluntary work done by so many in our constituencies—I suggest to the House that the well-established British tradition of generosity needs a gentle nudge in the right direction.

As we move towards the end of the century, a curious combination of trends is becoming evident. Not only do we have a general increase in prosperity; we have a population that is living longer, fewer people leaving schools and entering employment, earlier retirement and more leisure time. However, there will always be a section of our society that needs extra support.

With the permission of the House, I want to explore means whereby resources, both personal and financial, can be guided, without any form of compulsion, into worthwhile projects. We now have the wherewithal, but we need the enthusiasm and energy to put it to the maximum advantage. On this side of the House, at least, we have long believed in the idea of individual self-help. It has always seemed to me that this rather narrow and selfish concept should be widened to what I choose to call "community self-help".

I can think of no better example to prove my point than the emergence of neighbourhood watch schemes. They started without the direct involvement of the Government or the police, with the object of protecting property. Perhaps that is materialistic, but, equally it is both prudent and proper. Not only have those schemes increased from a bare two schemes in 1982 to 66,000 this year, but, as I have seen in my constituency in Wimbledon, the movement has developed through a network of co-ordinators into a social entity in itself. People get to know each other and to discuss the needs of others in their areas. Self-interest, therefore, has led to more neighbourly behaviour and, perhaps most importantly of all, social cohesiveness.

Local businesses have—perhaps not entirely altruistically, since advertising is involved—sponsored the production and delivery of newsletters. The success of the scheme has yet to be fully evaluated, although the trend for crime against property is downwards. It may prove to be an inexact science, but no one can discount the value of the cultivation of areas of common interest in an increasingly impersonal world.

A weakness in neighbourhood watch is often the understandable shortage of police manpower deployed in order to link up with the scheme. I suggest that the obvious remedy for that is urgent and vigorous recruitment to the special constabulary. It dismays me that in England and Wales the numbers have actually fallen from 17,000 in 1968 to 16,000 in 1987, and the picture in Scotland is very much worse. Although the increased recruitment of females is to be welcomed, it disguises the real drop in male manpower.

The appearance of so-called guardian angels in this country—in spite of the fact that they have impressed some of my colleagues—caused me deep misgivings. Why on earth should a vulnerable passenger on the Underground be reassured more by a bestudded vigilante, festooned with badges, than by the comforting sight of a

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uniformed special constable? We should have a campaign to recruit "specials" to act as a bridge between the regular police force and the public, and to help improve our record in law and order, which does not always bear close examination. Crimes against people may be far outnumbered by crimes against property, but we cannot tolerate our constituents being afraid of going about their daily lives, in spite of the sterling efforts of our police force.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I agree wholeheartedly with what the hon. Gentleman said about the special constabulary. Does he agree that it has a further advantge, in that it enables people who might wish to change careers and to join the police force in their late twenties or their thirties to see what it is like while being specials, and also gives the chief officers of police the opportunity to see what they are like while they are acting as specials? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a considerable advantage in recruiting to the police force people in early middle years with some experience of other jobs?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I am well aware of the hon. and learned Gentleman's interest in the subject. I endorse his remarks entirely. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will comment with more authority and in further detail from the Front Bench.

Active Citizenship in uniform could also be developed in the reserve forces, which are very well represented in my constituency by the Territorial Army, sea cadets and air training units, for which a recruitment campaign was launched last year. As the last generation of employers who did military service pass into retirement, we, the only NATO country in Europe not to have national service, must ensure that society recognises the importance of releasing employees for such training. Although I recognise that this is not the direct responsibility of my hon. Friend, the importance of reserve forces to the country's defence is vital, and will I hope be the subject of a debate on another day.

The responsibility of employers leads to a third exciting area to be explored—namely the secondment by companies of employees to voluntary sector projects. I believe that this has been described by Ralf Dahrendorf as "social entrepreneurship". Mr. Dahrendorf can hardly be described as a Conservative. Our major companies, such as IBM, whose managers have discretion to allow up to half a day off per week to employees, British Petroleum and United Biscuits are now following the lead of companies in the United States. I welcome the fact, too, that the Civil Service is involved.

Once again it is a two-way process. The companies feel that their employees come back with broadened horizons, the employees feel they have achieved something themselves, and the Institute of Directors proclaims that the pro bono publico spirit is alive again.

Business in the Community, an association of major United Kingdom businesses, also works with local and central Government and voluntary organisations to revitalise life in local communities in a wide range of projects. For example, in inner cities it supports urban regeneration, not only in bricks and mortar and in providing jobs, but by improving the environment and the quality of life. People are encouraged to stop whingeing and to tackle issues from basic social needs to taking pride in their surroundings by the elimination of graffiti and litter.

More recently still, active citizenship has been addressed by the Prince's Trust and the Commission on Citizenship, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales and Mr. Speaker respectively. Those two organisations are jointly exploring means of giving opportunities to young adults from all walks of life, from the age of 16 to 25, to do voluntary work for from four to 12 months. That is clearly a critical time in young people's lives, as they move from dependency to independence. It is early days yet, but the Prince's Trust has already done a pilot scheme that may be complementary to the pioneering work done by community service volunteers. A recent paper, "Service for the Nation" published by the Royal College of Defence Studies, recognises the non-military possibilities of this type of initiative.

Again it is a question of providing a framework. It is not inventing a new and artificial breed. Ten per cent. of youngsters are already active in the voluntary sector, and their awareness of citizenship may now be increased by the inclusion of the subject in the restructured curriculum. I urge my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to ensure that his Department works closely with the Department of Education and Science to recognise that citizenship, far from being a woolly sociological subject, has an important place in rounding the educational system, to go beyond mere academic qualifications. The hope is that prospective employers, following the example of the influence of the Peace Corps in the United States, will take positive note of those with voluntary work on their curricula vitae, before employing them.

In time, the scheme may be extended to adults, and to the retired. Energetic people with experience are increasingly ploughing back their expertise through organisations such as the Retired Executives Action Clearing House—REACH—which is an example of what I understand is fashionably known as "grey power".

Finally, I endorse the philosophy of the role of the voluntary sector in our society. There is a negative school of thought that thinks that the extension of Victorian values, of self-help and private charity is merely a cheap way of displacing the welfare state. However, the opposite is precisely the case. The voluntary sector not only allows extra resources to be provided, but manages those resources more efficiently than does the state. I see that as a most worthy move away from what Kingman Brewster, the former American ambassador in London, dubbed the "entitlement society".

Although there is always scope for improvement, the Government's record in this respect is excellent. In the last 10 years, the material support for the voluntary sector has risen 92 per cent. in real terms and now £280 million is provided annually, either by direct grant to over a thousand voluntary bodies or via the urban programme.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way in his interesting speech. When the community programmes were cut in Wimbledon, was any of the socially related voluntary work then taking place chopped, as it was in my constituency of Hull to a serious extent?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I hope that it is not

impertinent of me to say that I suspect that I know more about the deployment of funds in the London borough of Merton than he does, but I bow to his experience in Kingston upon Hull, West. I could tell him of the vast range of organisations that are doing worthy work in Wimbledon, and which are critically examined every year to see whether they are fulfilling the criteria that I am putting before the House. Each year, we look at value for money.

That intervention takes me directly on to the figures that I gave the House, which do not take account of grants via local government. In fact, I have tried with little success to find the statistics that show the total sums so deployed. In answer to the hon. Gentleman, in the London borough of Merton alone, the budget for 1989-90 amounts to £600,000, ranging from the Wimbledon Guild, which specialises in flexible quick response to people in need, through Merton MIND and victim support schemes, and many other worthy organisations which I am sure are replicated in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

To quote the title of one of the leaflets produced by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, such organisations should not be "taken for granted". However, the other side of the coin is that voluntary bodies should always examine their own organisations critically, to avoid empire building and the sort of top heavy bureaucratic structure which is exactly what the Government are trying to avoid. The whole exercise is nonsense if the maximum resources do not reach the target.

While not detracting from the marvellous work done by national organisations such as the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the thrust of my argument for active citizenship implies a trend to more localised help within communities. I believe that people will respond more readily if they see in their own areas, the fruits of their efforts and generosity.

The House looks forward to the Government's White Paper on charities and their reaction to the Woodfield report.

Clearly, any recommendations for proper regulation of charities, combined with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's recent raising of the threshold for payroll giving, would increase both the confidence of the public, and the level of giving, already running at £12 billion per year. Perhaps within the Government's response, or in addition to it, my hon. Friend the Minister will examine the relatively new concept of community trusts, sponsored by the Charities Aid Foundation. Here again, the argument is to link needs and resources on a local basis. Thirty such schemes have already been established. As they have shown the initiative which has been so well rewarded in the United States, perhaps more core funding would now be appropriate.

In conclusion, the role of the active citizen and voluntary organisations, combined with the concept of community self-help, is not wishy-washy do-gooding, it is a hitherto inadequately explored area, whereby a practical framework can be put in place for the benefit of all.

I believe that hon. Members of all parties will accept that increased affluence and prosperity in a free enterprise society must be linked to greater responsibility for others. In that spirit I commend the motion to the House.

9.54 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on selecting this motion for debate this morning. It is a valuable opportunity to discuss both the good points and some of the deficiencies facing the voluntary sector. The hon. Gentleman is a rare if not a unique bird in this House, being both a doctor and a barrister and he has perhaps a broader opportunity than many, being a member of two professions that are under attack at present, to see the broad scope in which the voluntary sector operates and the problems that it faces.

The hon. Gentleman illustrated the diversity of the voluntary sector. Even in a rural constituency such as mine, one can see that diversity, with activities ranging through bodies such as the Red Cross, which is extremely active in rural areas, in citizens advice bureaux, and in new agencies such as the bilingual English and Welsh AIDS helpline. Along with many other organisations they make a most valuable contribution to the community.

However, I should like to sound a note of caution. We must be careful that we do not rely too much on the voluntariness of the sector. It is right and of great benefit to society that the voluntary sector should prosper. However, that prosperity will not develop if it is not funded adequately, and that means adequate funding from both local and central Government to give the sector the encouragement and the resources that it needs to operate in a way that will benefit society as much as possible.

Two particular parts of the voluntary sector are causing me concern at the moment. The first is the citizens advice bureaux and the second is law centres. I should make it clear that I do not criticise the citizens advice bureaux in any way. They make a wonderful contribution in probably every constituency in the country towards meeting the problems that people face. Our constituency surgeries are large enough as it is, but imagine what they would be like if there were no citizens advice bureaux. We would probably be there from Saturday morning until late on Sunday night. If, as in my constituency, one has to hold surgeries in towns that are 30 or 40 miles apart, one would probably never meet the need at all if the CABs were not there to take the main part of the burden.

Citizens advice bureaux face complex problems these days. The complexity of those problems and, above all, the range of issues that they meet have increased dramatically in the past 20 years or so. When I was a small boy and was made to shake tins—probably illegally because I was under age to do so—to help my mother to collect money for the local citizens advice bureau, it was a small organisation meeting a residual need. Today, citizens advice bureaux, all over the country meet a mainline and a frontline need.

Many of the problems that they face are complicated legal problems, relating to housing, social security, race relations or other legal issues. In some areas—I cite as an example the well organised CAB at Thamesmead—it has been possible for the CAB to have legally qualified organisers, people with professional qualifications and a wide range of competence which they are able to use when they meet clients and to train their volunteers. But the salaries which the CABs are able to pay to organisers of that quality are small, so that the pool of people who are

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willing to make what in many cases is the self-sacrifice to work in what must be regarded as vocational jobs of that sort is diminishing.

In areas such as that, it is difficult to obtain suitable volunteers; they are not coming forward because many people are frightened by the range and complexity of problems. In other areas, such as in my constituency, where there is a well-organised CAB in Newtown, although the manager is extremely competent but not professionally qualified, she is able to draw on a larger pool of volunteers, perhaps because it is easier to find suitable volunteers in a country area. But the number of volunteers is diminishing there too, again because of the complexity of problems and the difficulty of resourcing suitable training opportunities for volunteers.

In some areas, local authorities are supporting their CABs well. In others, they are less willing to support them, and blame the Government for the lack of resources. It would not be helpful if, in this morning's debate, I entered into a political argument over who was responsible for the short funding of CABs and similar agencies. What is important is for the Government to take the co-ordinating role in ensuring that CABs throughout the country are properly funded so that they can give the necessary service to deal with an ever more complicated work load and an ever-increasing number of clients.

In real terms, there has been a general decline under Conservative rule in the provision of law centres and advice through such centres. The great thing about law centres is that what one might crudely describe as expensive expertise is provided in them at low prices. In the average law centre there is a small number of full-time workers, many qualified as lawyers, and they also rely on volunteers. On the whole, the volunteers are practising solicitors and barristers who give their time free to assist the law centre. They are, therefore, a cost-effective system of provision of legal advice, even set against the £45 an hour legal aid rate for solicitors doing criminal work, about which we have read recently, let alone the apparently much higher rates required by solicitors in central London if they are not to go bankrupt.

There is a great need for law centres and that need will increase if the Government decide to introduce legislation that puts into effect a substantial part of the Lord Chancellor's proposed reforms. I shall not debate the merits of the Lord Chancellor's Green Papers. For the sake of this debate, I am prepared to accept that there will be changes and that one of them, whether or not it is justified, is the loss of solicitors' privileges in relation to conveyancing.

The consequences of that loss will be that in rural areas, a substantial proportion of solicitors' income will probably be lost to financial institutions. The same will apply in urban areas, particularly since the sale of council houses has provided solicitors with conveyancing income for some years.

It seems to be generally agreed that as a result of that —I do not want to exaggerate the position—there will be a diminution of the number of solicitors in practice in the less legally lucrative areas of the country, such as in small towns and in areas where there are large proportions of council housing and so on. That will mean less legal expertise being available in the private legal market. As I say, that is an inevitable consequence. It may be justified, but I do not want to enter that discussion today.

Those changes will result in a deficit in the availability of legal services. If there is not to be a three-tier legal service—one for large companies, one for the middle classes and practically none for the rest—part of the provision will have to be met through law centres. The Lord Chancellor's Department and the Home Office—certainly the Government—should shoulder a substantial share of the responsibility for co-ordinating and funding the provision of law centres and their funding.

I have in the past been opposed to the widespread provision of law centres in rural areas, much to the irritation of the Law Centres Federation. But it is clear that they will be needed in the future if the number of solicitors' offices in rural and medium towns diminishes, as seems likely.

The Legal Aid Board is moving towards franchishing and granting licences, as it were, for certain types of legal work to have local or subject monopolies. But it must be realised—as I am sure the Government realise—that one cannot just hand over large areas of legal work, for example, to the CABs because, with the best will in the world, they do not have the expertise and people to do it, and they must rely for legal advice, by and large, on legally qualified people. If the number of solicitors diminishes, there will not be so many appropriate volunteers. At present, many solicitors give their services free to CABs on a regular basis.

As a result of changes which will take place—the introduction of greater competition in legal services which will have the effect that I have described in the areas to which I have referred—we shall need to establish a better and public legal service for the community at large. The only conceivable way of doing that is thorough law centres. That would rely greatly on the principle of voluntariness and active citizenship, which the Government encourage.

I support that principle, but it is no use just talking about it; the Government must examine the areas where it is needed and do the pump-priming to ensure that the need is met. I predict that in two or three years from now, if the Government do not prime the pump of law centres, there will be the deficit to which I have referred.

In making these points I do not want to imply that there is a serious deficiency in the voluntary sector. However, if there is a deficiency, it is that resources cannot keep pace with imagination. Different types of voluntary services are flourishing in all communities, and that is to be welcomed. I hope that the Government will not merely talk about encouraging imagination but will provide the funding to enable the active imagination of the active citizen who wishes to help others to be put to useful effect.

10.9 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on raising this important issue. It is central to our time in terms of the need for an active citizenry, the number of people already involved, and the huge potential for involving many more of them. I speak partly as a member of Mr. Speaker's Commission on Citizenship, an initiative which will be of tremendous value to the development of active citizenship. In recent weeks, the

commission enjoyed a philosophical seminar on citizenship. It was clear that there are serious and important differences of opinion about what a citizen is and what is meant by citizenship, but I will not pursue the matter today.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have shown considerable interest in the subject. My right hon. Friend recently held a meeting to discuss some of the ways forward. The only universal agreement was that we did not want a national, bureaucratised, expensive machinery to be established for involving citizens in the work to be done.

Why should we bother about active citizenship? My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon has already covered much of the topic, but it will be convenient to refer to some of it again.

Modern developed industrial society is potentially alienating. Probably the most common single human ill in such a society is loneliness. Every week, general practitioners' surgeries are filled with people who have nothing wrong with them except that they are lonely and, because they are lonely, they are depressed, and their depression takes a physical form.

Half the demands on the National Health Service are psychosomatic. To a large extent, it is possible to relieve loneliness if only enough of us are prepared to take enough interest in our neighbour. It is true also that society is deeply lacking in self-confidence. It is an extraordinary phenomenon that even the most apparently self-confident people are extremely anxious about many things.

Yesterday, in the Children Bill Standing Committee, hon. Members talked about the fact that, of all the functions that a human being is called upon to perform, being a parent is probably the most demanding and certainly the one for which we have least preparation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon said, tower blocks are designed to make it almost impossible for young mothers and fathers easily to find their peers with whom they can discuss their problems.

One of the features of psychiatrists' waiting rooms, marriage guidance—now called Relate—consulting sessions, drop-in sessions, Church groups and other service departments is that young parents imagine that their problems with their children are unique. They are astonished and hugely relieved to discover that most of what they are suffering is suffered by parents all over the country. Because they believe that their problems are unique and are based on a grievous fault, they are extremely unwilling to discuss them with someone in authority. That problem would easily be overcome if only we could devise methods by which acceptable helpers—the word "counsellors" is too pompous—or friends could be found to help people to develop the self-confidence that every parent needs.

Talking of self-confidence, hon. Members are well above average in their commitment to voluntary work and altruism. Contrary to popular belief, the curriculum vitae of Members of Parliament are studded with voluntary work. Nevertheless, I wonder how many hon. Members would feel confident when faced with various kinds of physical or mental handicap. I have been too sheltered from meeting various kinds of disability, and, confronted with the need actively to intervene, I would be nervous and, probably, grossly incompetent. By integrating children with special needs into mainline schools we would go a long way towards dealing with the problem. When confronted with someone having an epileptic fit, for example, most people would run away because they would not know what to do. There is a tremendous amount to be said for exposing people, particularly the young, not only to people who help the disabled but to people with disabilities.

One of the most remarkable experiments in our society is the Community Service Volunteers, of which I am a trustee. It frequently has two volunteers living and working with a severely handicapped person. The most astonishing thing is not how much the handicapped person derives from it but how much he or she teaches the young people. Young volunteers who have done that work for six months or so say that they have been shaped and hammered by the person whom they looked after. They feel that the benefit was substantially on their side.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I am listening with great care to what my hon. Friend is saying. He has put a new thought into my mind. Is he saying that we must review our definition of the active citizen to mean not only formal volunteers but parents as the primary form of active citizenship—almost the foundation of the active citizenship movement in this country—with their responsibility for their children and families?

Mr. Rowe: I am delighted if I have put a new thought into my hon. Friend's mind. His mind is already so full of thoughts that it is remarkable that another can be fitted in.

The relationship between donor and recipient is enormously reciprocal. All of us are volunteers at one minute and paid at the next, and sometimes simultaneously. We tend to think of one role being exclusive of the other, but that is not the case.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon has pointed out, ours is in many respects a squalid country with litter in the streets, graffiti on the walls and many filthy streets and passageways. That is the product of a variety of factors, one of which is that too many citizens feel no sense of responsibility for the areas in which they live or through which they are passing.

The motor car has given us all a wonderful freedom, but it has also given us freedom to pollute the neighbourhoods of others. We have only to watch cigarette packets being hurled out of car windows and McDonald's boxes and other fast food packaging being dumped on the roadside to realise that people have no clear sense of responsibility in this regard, even in their own localities. We have now begun to realise that we can no longer address all the problems of society by paying someone else to deal with them.

Mr. Randall: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest. Implicit in what he has just said is a definition of the active citizen. Does he believe that, as some people have written—especially members of the Conservative party—the active citizens are those with money which they pass down to those without, or does he believe that the definition of active citizenship should embrace everyone in our society? If he holds the latter belief, how would he encourage, for instance, the homeless and deprived to become active citizens? Surely that in itself presents terrific problems.

Mr. Rowe: In my experience, and no doubt in that of the hon. Gentleman, generosity tends to come more

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readily from the poor than from the rich. I find a remarkable willingness to assist others on the part of those who have not much themselves; that willingness is not always so evident among those who have plenty.

We have a tremendous opportunity to encourage others to take more control of their lives. The homeless are a particularly difficult problem, but I believe that we should assist that often rather fragmented group—I have seen a number of television programmes that demonstrate the astonishing networks within it—to become more articulate and co-operative. I do not think that the motivation is difficult to derive, provided that people are prepared to get out there and do it. Such organisations as the Simon Community, which works regularly among such people, have built up the rapport that makes that possible.

The crux of the matter—I am sure that this is what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) is teasing me to say, but I shall say it none the less—is that there can be no such motivation without some prospect of a result. Perhaps we need to consult the homeless more: given the opportunity, I think that many of them would come up with solutions to their problems that might well be much easier to accomplish than those that we are trying to present to them from above.

Personal growth is an essential element. One of the saddest features of many people's lives is their experience of an education system that has handed them information and tested them in ways that have often made them feel that they are always going to lose. Too many people do not believe that it is their responsibility or, indeed, a potential pleasure to achieve their own growth.

Yesterday the chairman of the Training Agency came to speak to a Committee of the House. He said that he believed that the solution to the training problems of which we are all so well aware was to encourage others to realise the ability to control their own learning processes. They should feel, he said, that training, the acquisition of knowledge and the enhancement of their job opportunities was a matter for them as much as for their employers: that rather than such benefits being handed out by some Government agency or employer, a partnership should exist.

My experience as vice-chairman of the Pre Retirement Association has shown me that the world is full of people who are frightened of retirement. They are terrified of having nothing to do, and cannot imagine ways of filling their time that will keep them occupied. Those who have no such opportunity become prematurely aged and, in many cases, the problem of the social services departments. But how many of us know people of 80 or 90 who are active to the point at which we almost wish that they would leave us alone because they are so full of ideas with which they bully us along? Such people often move very swiftly and contentedly from old age to death. We should encourage personal growth throughout people's lives.

We should not forget that active citizenship is often very convivial: it can mean getting out and meeting people, sharing ideas, being stimulated and stimulating others, and having good fun. It does not necessarily mean doing things only for other people. Myriad clubs have grown up where people can take part in dancing, bowls, bird-watching and a hundred and one other activities. If I may misquote John Donne, any man's misery diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.

What else can be done? Let me list some fairly altruistic activities. First, there is befriending. We must establish a better mechanism—a sort of dating agency—for those who would like to befriend others and are not sure how to set about meeting people who need befriending.

Computer dating agencies, which have brought an increasing amount of pleasure and romance to single people, could be used as a model for a wide variety of other partnerships, such as ones between those who wish to give and those who would like to share. More could be done about that. A range of activities is open to people who are prepared to be friends, and if those activities were taken up they would assist the statutory services.

I have spoken in the House previously about the value of social workers being accompanied by volunteers. Volunteers not only give social workers companionship and, sometimes, protection against violence, but are frequently able to form the kind of relationships with families that it would be improper for social workers to develop. Such relationships may well be more effective than statutory social work.

There is a huge and unmet need for respite for carers. There are six million carers in this country, some of whom are as young as eight. Many of them desperately need the opportunity occasionally to go out to have their hair done, go shoppiing, meet a friend, go to the cinema or even have a holiday. There is a huge untapped market of people who would be prepared to take on that kind of work. Just as job sharing is creeping into the employment market, voluntary organisations responsible for administering social schemes should look much more seriously at job sharing among volunteers, as that could bring continuous support for a person or family.

Counselling is a huge growth industry, about which I sometimes have reservations. I think that too many counsellors vicariously work out their own anxieties on the people whom they are helping. That is actually a slander, because many counselling organisations take much trouble to vet and train their counsellors. There is no doubt that counselling, whether of those who have been burgled, involved in an accident or have debt problems, is much easier for a volunteer than for someone working for the statutory services. If someone is brought in from the statutory services, the person being cared for often has a lurking anxiety that the law will be involved.

I am interested to see that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) is in the House, because if anybody is interested in advocacy, he is. Advocacy is an immensely important element that is greatly underestimated. If we in the Conservative party are serious about handing some power back to the consumer of the social services, we must make it easier for people to know what is available, what their choices are, how to make their choice and how to change it, if it turns out that they have made the wrong choice. Such a concept is frightening to many professionals. However, they should take comfort from the Italian hospital that, as a matter of course, attaches to all patients who come into the hospital an advocate to fight their battles for them, whether they be with the staff, over food or appointments, or merely to talk to them about their fears or whether windows are shut at the right time. Those advocates were greatly resisted when

they were first introduced but the hospital now recognises them to the point of having two on its board of management.

We know how many primary schools have been kept going and made successful by the mothers who initially come to help because their children attend the school, but then find that helping children read, keeping an eye on them and helping in their play is such fun that they stay on long after their own children have left the school. We are much too shy about bringing volunteers into secondary schools. That is a large area of activity that is mutually beneficial. For example, how many men in local communities would enormously enjoy becoming unofficial coaches to a secondary school football team or whatever. They might want to be responsible for getting them to the matches. There is no reason why that should not become a growing part of the school provision, particularly in schools which, for all sorts of reasons, no longer feel that they can, or wish to, take teams away from the school. That would help to develop the partnership between the school and the community.

How long will it be before the police generalise the experiment being carried in Birmingham, Handsworth, where volunteers come out with them and interact with the public alongside the police? It diminishes the antagonism sometimes felt between Asian communities and an essentially white police force if some of the people going out with the police are Asian volunteers, who can speak to the public in their own language and with a clear understanding of their customs.

As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said, there is a question about standards. One consequence of having so many volunteers interacting in these various ways is that people become aware of where the shoe pinches and have ideas about who makes a good manager, and who a bad manager, of the statutory services. They are given a much clearer idea of what would be cost-effective expenditure, and what would not. That would be a valuable challenge for the statutory services.

Since this is the House of Commons, which debates, among other matters, what Governments should and should not do, I shall say a few words about the Government's role in this subject. As I have said, it would be wrong to have some kind of great national bureaucracy, presided over by a Minister who tries to create active citizens. However, why does the Inland Revenue Staff Federation find it so difficult to persuade the Treasury to allow its staff to have more time for the type of activity that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon talked about? The IBM 10 per cent. rule that allows its staff to take the equivalent of half a day a week for voluntary activities has benefited the company enormously. It has provided the staff with a degree of self-confidence and flexibility of mind that more than repays the small amount of work that IBM loses. The company has discovered that the people who are trusted to go out for such activity, come back and wipe up the half day's work as though they had never had the time off. The Paraplegic Games are run almost entirely by IBM staff taking their 10 per cent. in a lump. I wonder whether we can persuade the Government to give a boost to a 10 per cent. club. There is already a 1 per cent. club and I think that businesses would enjoy the possibility of a 10 per cent. club, although they are sceptical because too many things are being wished upon them. However, I believe that this suggestion would be good for them. We are always hearing about the importance of training staff to be flexible.

One issue that Mr. Speaker's commission is considering is how we can accredit the sort of work that is done by active citizens. It is worth asking why only one school in the country has A-levels in the citizenship course. The answer is simply that traditional school teachers believe that citizenship should be done by less able pupils. That is a gross misunderstanding of what it is all about. If they have any sense, the employers of the future will be looking at active citizenship as an important part of someone's curriculum vitae. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will take a closer interest in all this.

This is not just a domestic British matter. We live in a global village. Once the aeroplane was invented, all sorts of things came under strain—not least the British citizenship rules. People can travel all over the world and stock markets can respond to each other's communications within seconds, so we must consider the active citizen in a worldwide sense.

Some traditional useful activities are going on. I am associated with HOST, the Foreign Office, British Council and Royal Victoria League joint activity for making foreign students welcome in British homes. One of the most disastrous features of bringing foreign students to study here—we should do much more of it; I am a great enthusiast for it—is leaving them entirely alone at Christmas and weekends and never bringing them into a British home. They either go home feeling that Britain is a cold, unfriendly place or, worse, they are taken up by people who want to undermine this country and return them to their countries positively hostile towards us.

There is a good deal of sponsorship and that is entirely appropriate. There are some telling advertisements pointing out that for the cost of one not especially expensive dinner in a British restaurant a child can be maintained for a year in some other country.

The active citizen working abroad is indispensable to the future of the world. It is no longer a case of de haut en bas—no longer does all the expertise rest in Britain and the West, to be taken abroad by some generous missionary in a topee. We find when we arrive at these countries that sophisticated voluntary organisations already exist there and have a great deal to teach us. One of the biggest organisations of all has learnt that lesson well. The Church of England has now understood how much it has to learn from churches in places such as Uganda. I hugely value this reciprocity.

If we can develop opportunities for active citizens of every age to share their experience and knowledge around the world, we shall do something to alleviate the astonishing problem that 15 per cent. of the world's population uses 85 per cent. of its energy. Over time, the great western democracies which have been so economically successful may be compelled to accept a slower rate of growth—or even a negative rate from time to time. It is extremely difficult to win a democratic election by promising people a slower rate of growth, but if enough people have been exposed to the opportunity of working alongside others in India, China and Africa, this sort of lesson will be more easily learnt.

Even in the European Community, some progress is being made. The Cumri Community Conservation

[Mr. Rowe]

Challenge, in which CSV has a part to play, includes an exchange with Portugal. It is good that the European Community is trying to build links across frontiers.

I believe with tremendous fervour that active citizenship is central to the sort of society in which we want to live. Millions of people have too little to do and too little self-confidence to understand what they can offer. They could be motivated relatively easily to give of themselves to others and, in so doing, to discover the great truth that giving of one's self to others enriches a person far more than any other human activity.

10.44 am

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on his choice of motion for debate and on the skilful way in which he introduced it.

I am delighted to be called to contribute to the debate because voluntary organisations, their membership and their contribution to British life are an essential part of the fabric of our nation.

The concept of voluntary work and service working side by side with the state is so familiar to us all that we sometimes tend to forget that such a tradition is not to be found in some of our European partners, or at least not to the extent that it is found here. It is a tradition that should be nurtured, encouraged and cherished and, as other hon. Members have said, never taken for granted.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance and influence of the voluntary sector in all spheres of British life. We are told that there are more than 250,000 charitable organisations, but obviously the scope of voluntary organisations and activities goes much further than that. I want briefly to explore some of the reasons for their importance to us all.

First, there is the idea of voluntary effort being used to provide for a particular need. That represents a healthy desire on the part of communities not to depend on all solutions coming from the state. I was interested to hear the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) imply—he may not have meant to do so—that the force and power of voluntary organisations is less in rural areas than in urban areas. I think he used the sentence, "Even in a rural area like the one I represent there is voluntary activity." I suggest that voluntary activity is especially strong in rural areas; it certainly is in the one that I represent. Communities that are scattered and far flung are accustomed to shifting for themselves.

The village in which I live has a population of about one thousand and is by no means atypical.

Mr. Alex Carlile: That would be a town in Montgomeryshire.

Mrs. Shephard: We also have villages of 25 inhabitants.

In my village there are two lots of almshouses, allotments, a parent-teacher association, a playgroup association, a sports and social club, a flourishing St. John Ambulance Brigade, a big youth section, a Women's Institute, a Mothers' Union and a forget-me-not club for the elderly—and I am sure that that list is incomplete.

Mr. John Patten: How many pubs?

Mrs. Shephard: We have no pub, which may account for the great success of some of the voluntary organisations.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Lady is right to rebuke me for using the word 'even'. I agree that voluntary work is strong in rural areas. However, does she accept that in some rural areas in which, as in mine, there has been a decline in the cohesiveness of Chapel communities, there remains a considerable need to develop voluntary work?

Mrs. Shephard: I am not an expert on the decline or otherwise of Chapel communities. I defer to the hon. and learned Gentleman in that respect, although I must point out that in my village—I apologise for using a sample of one—the Chapel has moved itself to the neighbouring village, yet we have a flowering of voluntary organisations and activities. Whether the two are connected I would not like to say, but the Chapel's move does not seem to have made an appreciable difference. The position in Montgomery may be different.

This vast range of activities is run by volunteers from every social group. That point should be stressed because someone will certainly argue that voluntary activity is confined to the affluent middle classes. All the voluntary activities provide for different needs within the village and they enrich immeasurably the lives of those who give and those who receive. I should like to make a special mention of the playgroup movement, which flourishes in my village, in my constituency and throughout the country. Almost more than any other voluntary activity, the playgroup movement has encouraged the involvement of women from every social background, through the powerful incentive of the education, wellbeing and pre-school development of their own children. That truly powerful incentive has led to the involvement of women across the broadest social specturm and has provided them with the experience of running and organising an activity which directly benefits their own children, meeting other women in the processes and dealing with difficulties of organising an ongoing service.

The wide range of voluntary organisations should remind us that the voluntary sector sometimes provides a preferable service to that provided by the state, simply because it is different and therefore represents a choice. We can all find suitable examples, but I should like to mention a residential and day-care service for elderly and handicapped people. In one of the market towns in my constituency, Downham Market, two organisations run voluntary day care services for elderly people and for those who are physically or mentally handicapped. One of those organisations is based on the Methodist Church. How I wish that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery were still in his place. No doubt he will be able to read that key point in *Hansard*.

The day-care centre based on the Methodist Church has so many people wishing to help that there is a waiting list of volunteers, which at the last count was about 180 people, who could not be fitted in to the facility that the Church wished to provide. That may be something of a record, but it represents the desire of so many people to contribute and to give. Those organisations are examples of day care facilities for the elderly and the handicapped provided by volunteers, but closely enmeshed with the service provided by the statutory agencies so that referral

may be made by the local health service, GPs, hospitals and social services to voluntarily provided day care centres.

The voluntary sector has greater freedom to experiment with different ways of providing care than has the statutory sector. The recipients of the care and those running private, voluntary and statutory facilities can benefit. I shall use an example not from my constituency but from the city of Norwich, the capital of Norfolk, which provides a wide range of models which will be of interest in the debate. The Great hospital provides a continuum of care for elderly people ranging from small houses to sheltered flats and bed-sitting rooms all within a beautiful setting near the cathedral. Medical care is provided on the premises so that the continuum of care provides tremendous security for the clients of the hospital. It is a very old foundation—I would not be exaggerating if I said that it was 500 years old. It has always been run by volunteers—together with paid staff—who give up an enormous amount of time to organise the affairs of the Great hospital for the benefit of the residents.

I used that example because it has inspired the statutory agencies in Norfolk, through Norfolk social services department and Great Yarmouth and Waveney health authority, to provide, in conjunction with the Broadland housing association a similar establishment for elderly people in Great Yarmouth. Thus the co-operation between the three agencies, with the help of volunteers in the WRVS and befriending, has established in Great Yarmouth a model of care which provides a continuum of care in a secure environment in which elderly people are tenants and not clients and that gives them an important sense of independence. They can choose how much care they need on a day-to-day basis. How invaluable it must be for an elderly person not to feel that he or she has to attend a communal meal but can have meals on wheels in his or her flat, provide his or her own meal or go into the dining room. They can exercise that choice every day. That model was based on the freedom to experiment in the voluntary sector which the statutory sector cannot enjoy, but it can benefit. Voluntary effort can also support the work of statutory agencies, and it is not always uncritical, and that must be a good thing.

The role of school governors, which, in one form or another is as old as the education system, is alien to education systems in France and Germany. What could be more logical than for interested consumers of a service and representatives of the local community to have a direct voluntary input into the provision of that service? How valuable it is for those providing that service that every community should have a group of lay volunteers with a specialised knowledge of that service. The new responsibility placed upon school governors by the Education Reform Act 1988, far from being a threat to those who work in the education system, as was maintained when the Education Reform Bill was passing through the House, has increased the understanding of the difficult and demanding role of teachers.

One school governor who is a successful business man with a small business, always had a certain disregard for people who received a regular salary cheque from the state and thought that teachers had an easy life, given the hours that he thought they worked and, as he put it, their 13 weeks' holiday a year. His close involvement as a governor of two schools under the Education Reform Act caused him completely to revise his opinion of the difficulty of teachers' roles, and the key managerial role of a head teacher of a school and has greatly increased his support for and appreciation of the education service. Those organisations and groups of volunteers which exist to support the statutory agencies can contribute to the statutory agencies and to the understanding of their work in the wider community.

We are all familiar with the many hundreds of thousands of groups that support and supplement the work of the statutory sector. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who has a deep knowledge of the whole of this subject, pointed out the practical help that volunteers can give to statutory agencies. We could all cite scores of marvellous examples in our own constituencies. The Friends of the Wayland hospital in Attleborough in my constituency have, in concert with the regional health authority, raised sufficient money to provide and equip a wonderful rehabilitation centre, which is attached to the hospital. The people involved in that organisation feel that they have a stake in the hospital and are deeply involved with it.

When the White Paper on the National Health Service is brought into effect, I hope that it will be appreciated that, through the setting up of hospital trusts, we can capitalise on local community support for our hospitals so that they can have a greater freedom to benefit from local enthusiasm. That point has been widely missed in the public reaction to the White Paper, but I am confident that it will emerge as people have the opportunity more closely to consider those issues.

By working with statutory agencies, voluntary groups can supplement statutory provision. I wish especially to mention the organisation Homestart, which will be familiar to many hon. Members. There is an excellent branch in Thetford in my constituency, and another in the west of south-west Norfolk. Homestart has a paid organiser whose task is to organise carefully trained and selected volunteers to work with families that are potentially in difficulty and nearing breakdown. They help to prevent a breakdown and the possible taking into care of the children of the family. The volunteers are often people who have been through difficult times themselves. The statutory social workers must accept that volunteers can often provide much more realistic and practical advice —another point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent—than can social workers who have many cases on their books and who want to whizz in and out of homes at great speed. It is an extraordinary and effective use of volunteers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent made the excellent point that volunteering can and should be fun. Certain groups, which I shall describe as enthusiasts, can in pursuing their enthusiasms make a valuable contribution. Hon. Members could no doubt cite good examples of that. A large number of people in my constituency are deeply interested in the history of our area. Next month, a hardworking, skilful and gallant band of people at Swaffham, who have set up an excellent local museum, will have the satisfaction of seeing it opened by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. A similar venture at Watton, launched by a group of young enthusiasts, resulted in the opening of a museum about the role of the town of Watton during the last war. So strong is the commitment of such volunteers that they can infect a whole community with their enthusiasm.

[Mrs. Shephard]

An interesting point that has not yet been mentioned is that those who are already grouped together to pursue an interest—for example, tennis, angling or potholing—have such a strong desire to help others that in many cases they feel that they have a responsibility not only to come together to enjoy their own interests, but to pursue a voluntary activity that will benefit others. In the market town of Watton the Loch Neaton angling club last summer equipped the local fishing water—I dare not call it a pond or I shall be drummed out of my constituency—and the surrounding grounds to enable handicapped people, especially handicapped youngsters, easily to gain access to the water's edge so that they can enjoy the sport of angling. I was fortunate enough to be asked to be present at a prizegiving for handicapped youngsters who, in many cases, had outstripped the prowess of non-handicapped anglers and caught large numbers of extremely large fish. This is not a fishing story; I actually saw the fish. It is another case of voluntary activity that should not be overlooked.

One of the most impressive marks of the strength of the voluntary sector is that certain tasks are wholly entrusted to it. In some cases, that is regarded with incredulity by our European neighbours. For example, they are amazed by our legal system, under which 98 per cent. of all criminal cases are, in the first instance, heard by lay volunteers—mainly magistrates who, although trained and expert, nevertheless are volunteers. It is only when we explain that system to visitors from, for example, France and Germany, that we appreciate how amazing it is.

Although south-west Norfolk has no coastline, I feel that I must mention the astonishing achievements of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, which provides a lifeboat service for all our shores. I think that I am right in saying that it does so without any state aid. It is a superb, fantastic achievement, which is unique to Britain and of which we should be proud.

The spin-off from such a multiplicity of voluntary organisations—that rich texture of local personal involvement in all aspects of our national life—is the experience it gives of the workings of democracy and public life. Again, it is something that we tend to underestimate. Everybody involved in a club, a society or a voluntary organisation has to have experience of how to make that organisation work, of its procedures, of its annual general meeting and of nominations and seconding for elections. Boring as it may appear to some, our nation's involvement in so much voluntary activity gives a far greater number of people in Britain than in France or Germany a first-hand experience of the workings of the democratic process. Things sometimes go wrong, but that could also be said at national level.

We should not underestimate the importance in democracy of the educative process that is provided by voluntary activities. To no group is that experience more valuable than to women. Because of career breaks, women are more heavily represented than men in the voluntary sector. Indeed, their achievements lead many women to a greater involvement, or a desire for it, in public and political life. It is a pity that, within the public appointments network, there is not the sort of representation of women that their numbers within the population—52 per cent.—and their experience in the voluntary sector surely justify.

I warned my hon. Friend the Minister that I would be presenting to the House—and although he is not present, I do not shrink from doing so—a horrendous battery of statistics. When Ministers are exhorting the private sector and managers in the public sector to employ more women, to use their potential in the work force and to provide for them to return to work, can it be right that appointments to public bodies, which are within the gift of those Ministers show the following percentages? My figures are taken from 1987, and were my hon. Friend present I could say to him, given that he is chairman of the special ministerial group on women's matters, that I am confident that the figures will be far-outstripped and improved for 1989. In 1987, the percentage of women appointed to public bodies by the Home Office represented 30 per cent. of the total; by the Scottish Office, 29 per cent.; the Department of Health and Social Security, 26 per cent.; the Department of Trade and Industry, 22 per cent.; the Department of Employment, 16 per cent.; the Department of the Environment, 15 per cent.; the Welsh Office, 14 per cent.; the Department of Education and Science, 12 per cent.; the Department of Transport, 3 per cent.; and the Department of Energy, 0 per cent.

It is true that last year Cabinet Office public appointments reached 46 per cent. which is much more like it, but the Lord Chancellor's Department achieved only 18 per cent., telecommunications only 18 per cent., the Central Office of Information 14 per cent., and the Office of Arts and Libraries 12 per cent. The figures for women's representation on the boards of nationalised or privatised industries show that British Rail has two women, but the BAA, British Coal, the Electricity Council, the Post Office and something that I cannot read, but it is blameworthy, had no women at all.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend has given yet another reason why we are having so much trouble with British Rail in my part of the country.

Mrs. Shephard: How much more trouble my hon. Friend would be having with British Coal, which has no representation of women at all.

My hon. Friend the Minister has clear responsibility in this sector. I am confident that under his chairmanship of the ministerial group the position will be, and probably already has been, improved. Women must be allowed to use the invaluable experience that many of them gain from working in the voluntary sector to progress to public appointments or political life. I note that my hon. Friend the Minister is returning to the Chamber. He has missed all my compliments, but I hope that they have been noted down. I shall have to find a way of repeating at least one of my graceful compliments.

Many women approach political life via the voluntary sector and public appointments. We have only 41 female hon. Members out of a total of 650. If we are to use the potential of women to the extent that we should, the Government must put their house in order. I am confident that my hon. Friend the Minister will make every effort to bring women's representation up to a level that reflects not only their number in the population but their potential, experience, skill and contribution to this sphere, which is within the Government's gift.

The voluntary sector is alive, well and growing. One of its most splendid aspects is that young people, through experience in school, are encouraged to be involved in it. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent said that he knew of only one school that had pursued citizenship studies at Â level. I know of no secondary school in Norfolk that does not run a community involvement course for all its youngsters at some stage of the secondary school curriculum. It is certainly not confined to the least able. Norfolk values such experience for youngsters, which I am delighted to say has led to the involvement of many young people in voluntary activities in the county.

We are at an interesting time in the development and encouragement of voluntary activity within state provision. The reforms passed in the Education Reform Act 1988 and those proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients" place emphasis on the need for consumer involvement in the provision of state services. Via our unequalled tradition of voluntary activity, we can ensure that the voice of the consumer and the community are heard in state provision. I believe that we are better than anyone at such activity, and by harnessing that voluntary activity and enthusiasm into statutory provision we can move forward confidently using the rich tradition of the voluntary sector side by side with the splendid provision being made by the Government.

11.16 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on initiating this most valuable debate. The concluding remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) drawing attention to the need to appoint more women to nationalised industries and boards were extremely important. I wonder how many women are listed among the great and good of this land who are available for the special appointments to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. John Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene so early in his speech. I join him in expressing appreciation of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard). In the interests of open government, of which I am a strong advocate, I should say that at an earlier stage in her career I appointed her to a public appointment.

Mr. Greenway: There can be no greater tribute to the foresight of my hon. Friend the Minister or to the perception of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West in accepting the post.

Women are treated unequally. When they have had their families and return to paid or voluntary work, society does not allow them to return to the post that they left, yet they are much better people for the experience of having brought up children. In-service training or a suitable course would help to bring them up to date. They should be encouraged to come back into voluntary work or professional work at the point at which they left off, or even a little higher.

Women make particularly good magistrates. There ought to be many more of them.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are 42 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend says that there are 42 per cent., but that is not enough. My experience of women magistrates, particularly in children's courts, is that they always go to the heart of the problem. They never back off in the way that sometimes their male counterparts back off. I must beware of generalising, but I reiterate that women make outstanding magistrates and that there ought to be more of them.

I should not, however, like the nation to go the way of Ealing council. Its policies regarding women are excessive. There is a very expensive women's unit that disburses large sums of tax and ratepayers' money on promoting women's activities, particularly for lesbian women. I have mentioned on other occasions that advertisements can currently be seen all over Ealing that are directed at lesbians only. They are being invited to join courses in self-defence.

Mr. John Patten: Disgraceful.

Mr. Greenway: Yes, it is disgraceful, because it is discriminatory. Self-defence is valuable and important for all women. To make it available just to a handful of women, excluding all the others, is to discriminate against women who are not lesbians. I believe that women who are not lesbians are in the vast majority.

There are other activities for women on which councils such as Ealing spend money. They provide courses on subjects other than self defence for women, as well as free parties and binges, with transport provided. Men are excluded. The patronage of women does not promote voluntary activity of any kind. That is wrong and insulting.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *indicated assent.*

Mr. Greenway: I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West agrees with me. *[Interruption.]* I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) for her support. It is disgraceful, and something ought to be done about it.

Before my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) leaves the Chamber, I should like to refer to his most interesting speech. I was a professional teacher for 23 years. I am a little concerned about the suggestion that volunteer parents should run school teams. The good, willing amateur is not always the best equipped to work with children. I should support his idea if he would agree with me—and I think that he might—that anybody who wants to coach a soccer, baseball, netball or other team as a parent ought to be trained in how to coach and teach children. It is a specialised job. It should not be given just to the enthusiastic amateur. He or she can do more harm than good.

Mr. Rowe: I explained to the Minister that I had to leave the Chamber before the end of the debate, for which I apologise. I accept entirely what my hon. Friend says. Two elements, however, need to be considered. First, if there are no activities, because the school does not have the resources to provide them, I believe that some enthusiastic amateur activities are better than none. Secondly, many people with remarkable skills are often excluded because they are not qualified teachers. Their skills should be welcomed in schools. I think that that trend will grow. However, I accept absolutely my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for speaking in such a welcome way from the Government Front Bench. If a person has a skill, that does not always mean that he can impart it to children. However, with that proviso, I go along with his happy intervention from that distinguished position, and I wish him a good day.

The weakening of the influence of the Church has gravely damaged—perhaps more than anything else—the volunteer spirit in our land. Jesus taught us to be good neighbours. "I am my brother's keeper" is fundamental to a willingness and a desire by the Christian individual or the Christian-influenced individual to go the extra mile, in any circumstances, if there is a job to be done. The Christian will examine his conscience and go and do it, if that is humanly possible. If there is a need for someone to run a youth club, or to help with meals on wheels, or to assist in countless other ways that are open to volunteers in our land, the Church has always taught that it is the duty of a Christian to give his time and talents without payment, as Christ did. That has always been part of the cement of the community of this land. The weakening of the Church has weakened that cement to the point of serious crumbling in some areas, which is very sad.

On the theme of its being more blessed to give than to receive, I believe that, in giving service of any kind, volunteers receive so much more than they give. The old lady who gives her time to look after a little child gets much pleasure and stimulus from being responsible once more for looking after a small child.

Volunteers also exercise polo ponies. Their riding has to be of a certain standard, but a wonderful thing; they do not have to bear the expense of owning polo ponies but they have the pleasure of riding them, and sometimes being bucked off on a cold day. However, they get back so much more than they give by exercising those ponies, and an experience of life that they might not otherwise get because they are riding ponies of a particularly spirited and able kind that are not always available to the amateur.

School governors have been mentioned by many speakers. I do not want to be pernickety, but I have to fence a little, having rightly paid a compliment to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West. School governors have not been around for as long as schools. Education was first brought to this land by the Church. Monks and nuns—well learned people—passed on their gifts to their pupils, but there was no question of school governors in the middle ages. School governors have arrived on the scene only in quite recent times.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Does my hon. Friend accept, nevertheless, that there has always been an involvement in education in this country of those who have not been teachers? My point was that there has always been a broader responsibility than that which is taken on by those whose task it is to impart knowledge. I feel confident that my hon. Friend will be able to accept that point.

Mr. Greenway: As always, my hon. Friend's confidence is well placed because I certainly accept that point. It is true to say that often teachers, such as monks, worked for no pay. Cardinal Hume, for example, was—and still is—an outstanding teacher. His unpaid service as a teacher has brought countless gifts to thousands of boys. He continues to teach as prelate and in his leadership of his Church. I am not, of course, saying that teachers should not be paid properly for their work, but so often, the man or woman working for altruistic reasons in teaching, as in other areas, seems to give so much more as a volunteer than the professional does.

I had experience of running the largest school in the country. When I asked teachers to do various tasks, they would say, "Harry, will I be paid extra for it?" I do not say that that is not a legitimate question for someone who has a family.

Mr. John Patten: Harry?

Mr. Greenway: They sometimes called me Harry and sometimes headmaster, but most often they called me sir and if they did not, I waited until they did. But increasingly, towards the end of my time in teaching, it was Harry.

I found that often when there was a demand for cash, the individuals concerned were not as good at the task as those who were prepared to do it for nothing. That seems to be an important principle, especially when applied to those masters and mistresses—if that is still a legitimate term in my profession——

Mr. John Patten: Very much so.

Mr. Alex Carlile: It is in the Conservative party.

Mr. Greenway: Perhaps I had better ignore that comment. The masters and mistresses who gave their time to run the debating society, to produce the school play or to take the team out every week did a marvellous job because they were doing it on a voluntary basis.

The headmaster of Harrow, Ian Beer, who was an outstanding head at three schools and played rugger for England—I have known him for 30 or 40 years—said recently that if the voluntary teaching of games in schools were phased out, as he fears it may be by the professionalism of teachers today who demand to work only within the hours set for them, teachers would lose a wonderful and special contact with their pupils. There is no doubt from my own experience of taking a team every Saturday throughout my time in the profession, whether cricket, rugger, hockey or riding, that that is true. I know that the relationships forged between teachers and pupils through those activities were of infinitely greater value than the relationships forged in the formal atmosphere of the classroom, especially when one was pressing towards examinations, which placed great pressures on masters and pupils.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I agree with the substance of the hon. Gentleman's comments, but does he not agree that teachers are much more likely to do important voluntary work such as he has described if they feel that they are valued as professional people? Does he not agree that teachers' salaries are still so low, especially considering the cost of living in London and other major cities, that they do not feel properly valued?

Mr. Greenway: I do not want to spend long on that point, but I had better take up the challenge. I received the Houghton award, so often spoken about, in 1974 from the Labour Government. By 1979, the value of that 34 per cent. increase had been eroded to nothing by the 27 per cent. inflation rate. Between 1979 and today, teachers' pay has improved by 30 per cent. in real terms and they are better paid than ever. I am not saying that there are not problems, such as the cost of housing, but they are better paid than ever before. There is also an increase in special

posts for them, so there are big opportunities for teachers. At least half the profession today are in posts of extra responsibility or extra prestige and are paid for that, which is to be welcomed.

Members of Parliament have a special position as leaders in the community—as do others, of course. I have no doubt that all my colleagues in the House today play leading parts in the voluntary sector in their constituencies. I am the president or patron—mostly president because that is somehow a better title—of 58 voluntary organisations and there are two or three more in the pipeline. Among those is that fine organisation, the British Legion, in which people take enormous responsibility as volunteers for the community in which they live. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad to hear the sound of support. Old comrades who are ill are visited by volunteers who take them food or perhaps a bottle of brandy or whisky, which they would otherwise be unable to afford. In Greenford recently, a young man in his 30s died from cancer, leaving a widow and young children. I am proud of the way in which my colleagues and friends in the Greenford branch of the British Legion rallied round the widow and children to look after them and give them love and support at a sad time. That is typical of the work that volunteers do in the British Legion.

Other hon. Members have mentioned scout and guide groups, and I am president of many. I also want to mention Age Concern, an organisation in which Members of Parliament and others who can find the time will be welcomed. Sometimes people who are together for 52 weeks a year are glad of the company of others, such as the good old president who breezes in and spends an hour or two with them, listening to their problems and talking them over. The same is true of those of more mature years who go to tea dances, about which we have heard so much.

I am president of the local branch of the Cancer Research Campaign and, like other branches, it raises thousands of pounds for cancer research. A young member of my family has been struck down by cancer and it is a great comfort to think that the treatment he is receiving has been made possible by the work of thousands of people who support the Cancer Research Campaign. I am glad to have put my own effort into it. Many volunteers work for that organisation because a member of their family has died from cancer or because they know someone who is suffering from it. Many people are cured today who would not have been cured without the efforts of such organisations.

Tenants' groups are important, as are the Red Cross and Arthritis Care—and I am president of the local branch. Some people suffering from arthritis can scarcely move and they need the support and encouragement of volunteers. Choirs and drama groups throughout the land are also warmly supported.

I want especially to mention a pub committee of 10 at the Plough in Northolt, which I formed six years ago because I heard that the Mandeville special school wanted to build a pool for mentally handicapped children. They were managing to get some money together but they were not going about it as constructively as they might because they did not know how to do so. I became the president of the group. We met once a month for four years and raised £70,000 and built the pool. The group made the most magnificent effort, raising funds in every conceivable way. They had their hair cut off, they grew their hair very long, they threw me into a swimming pool more than once and did all sorts of things.

The great thing about that group was that it was made up of ordinary men and women—housewives and lorry drivers, for example. None of them were professional people, but all had great hearts and all were determined. During those years, there were times when they said, "Harry, we can't stand any more." A couple would walk out for a month or two because of the tremendous pressure, but the hard core held firm and we eventually raised the money to build the pool, which was opened by Princess Anne last year. That was done entirely by the Northolt community and the Plough pub.

That is volunteering of the most constructive and wonderful kind. Why did they do it? One or two of them had children at the school. One of them told me, "My son cannot move. I think he might get some pleasure from being in warm water. He has nothing else so let us try to do something for him".

Many other things can be done within the community. The young can hold concerts for the elderly on a voluntary basis. The elderly love to see the young on stage, acting and singing for them, and the young can go out in the interval with cups of tea to give them extra pleasure. I am president of a group in my constituency that does that. Every year, we put on two concerts for pensioners. We attract 600 pensioners—all of them living in the constituency because it is a constituency effort—to each concert. We have some professional help and have to raise the money to pay for that, but otherwise the concerts are staged on an entirely voluntary basis. The more the young are integrated with the old, the more each will gain.

Trevor Huddleston is one of my greatest and longest-standing personal friends—although not, perhaps, always a political ally. I went to see him a few years ago when he was Archbishop of Mauritius. He is a wonderful man. No one else could have been so inspired in setting up voluntary groups. He had a hostel for the poor elderly, a hostel for the blind and an orphanage all on the same campus. The elderly loved the children, the blind loved the children, and the children loved the blind and the elderly. They were all integrated. Trevor Huddleston was inspired enough to set up groups of volunteers to raise the money for that. The leadership of such men has blazed a trail and set an example that the rest of us should study and follow if we possibly can. We can gain so much by doing so.

Voluntary lunch clubs for the elderly are enormously important. Sometimes local authorities set too much store by the numbers who attend, and they close them if they do not consider that there are enough people. I should like the principle to be established that a relatively small number can be regarded as constituting a feasible lunch club that can receive support from the local authority.

The travel pass for the elderly is enormously important, too, but some local authorities—in London anyway—seem to be threatening old people by not stating clearly that the pass will be reissued when it comes up for renewal. The Labour council in Ealing and other local authorities know very well that they must, by law, provide those passes. If necessary, under an amendment that several of us supported during our proceedings on the London Regional Transport Act 1984 they can be required to do so by the Secretary of State. Yet still the local authorities drag their feet as a means of exercising power over old people. They say, "We may carry on with the passes, but it is down

[Mr. Greenway]

to us." That is a cruel and unacceptable approach. The passes are elderly people's right and we should let them know that they are entitled to the passes and that they will have them regardless of what Ealing or any other council says. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), the Opposition Front Bench spokesman nodding his head in agreement.

Good neighbours are much better than good social workers, although that is not to decry the work of good social workers. Someone who cares about the person next door without being nosey is worth more than fine gold. That personal relationship will continue through thick and thin, whereas social workers necessarily come and go. However good a job a social worker or home help does there will be days when he or she will be required elsewhere and the continuity will be broken. The neighbour, on the other hand, is always there.

I end, as I began, by calling on the Churches to strengthen their efforts to teach individuals to be volunteers and to be committed to the community in which they live.

11.47 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on choosing this subject for debate and on his lucid speech. Wimbledon may be the home of tennis but, metaphorically speaking, Basildon has plenty of the round things that one needs to participate in the game. I also congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on their excellent contributions.

I am particularly pleased to be able to participate in the debate because it gives me another opportunity to praise all those in my constituency who have done such good work. Before I do that, however, I wish to congratulate the Government on promoting the ethos of individual responsibility. If that concept had been advanced with more determination in the 1960s we should not have faced many of the difficulties of the past 10 years. I congratulate the Government on all the encouragement that they have given to active citizens and voluntary organisations throughout the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North struck a chord when he mentioned the difficulties that he has experienced with his Socialist council. I am convinced that Socialist-controlled Basildon district council has no concept of what being an active citizen, or being engaged in voluntary work, actually involves. If it did, my poor hard-pressed ratepayers would not be faced this year with the largest rate increase in the country—57·9 per cent. It is no good taking money from the ratepayers and saying that it is genuine giving. That is a ridiculous concept. It is because of the council's approach to these matters and because of its fiscal mismanagement that in my constituency we have the most expensive theatre in the country. Even if there were a bottom on every seat every day of the week, we still could not meet the overall cost.

Mr. John Patten: Who controls the council?

Mr. Amess: It is a Socialist-controlled council. It has a majority of one. The casting vote is held by a Liberal Member, who then announced that he was becoming an Independent, but on every conceivable occasion he has voted with the Labour party. However, he has not had the guts to come out as a Labour party member or, perhaps, the Labour Members will not have him in their party. It is disgraceful that the hard-pressed ratepayers of Basildon are faced with that enormous rate increase.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has heard me mention before the "I love Basildon campaign". I am delighted to tell him that we have made tremendous headway with that campaign, which is all about saying that we have a fine town and that we want to keep it that way. We are tackling the problems that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent mentioned, such as litter, graffiti and vandalism. I shall be appearing unannounced in Basildon at various times throughout the night to discover what is going on there. I want to discover why we have little gatherings on street corners creating disturbances, when there is plenty for young people to do there. I shall also be visiting various parts of the town where there has been rubbish dumping. I want to see at first hand how we can encourage the whole community to participate in keeping the town the fine place that it is.

I am delighted to say that in Basildon we have a successful neighbourhood watch scheme. Some 526 schemes have been registered, covering 21,040 properties and helping 62,000 people. We also have five industrial watch schemes, three marine watch schemes and four hospital watch schemes. Six years ago Basildon had the highest reported rate of crime in Essex, but I am delighted to say that that is no longer the situation. The neighbourhood watch schemes have made a valuable contribution to the overall reduction in crime.

As someone who was born in the east end of London and lived there for 29 years, I can tell the House that it used to have a strong community spirit. The role of the active citizen and of voluntary organisations was paramount in the overall strength of that community. I deplore the way that—I believe through bad planning decisions in the 1960s—the community spirit has been somehow lost. I hope that what the Government are attempting to do in Docklands will restore the situation and will enhance the role of the active citizen and of voluntary organisations.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North who I believe within the next fortnight will be involved in national motivation week. That will make an active contribution to promoting the role of the citizen.

I am the Parliamentary unpaid spokesman for the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations. Most hon. Members have a hospital radio station in their constituencies. There are more than 300 hospital broadcasting services, involving some 11,000 volunteers, which broadcast to a listening audience of 250,000. For my sins, I used to broadcast in what was a cubby-hole in St. Andrew's hospital, Bow. I can speak first-hand of the magnificent efforts of those people who broadcast in our hospitals. The therapeutic effects of hospital radio has been proved time and time again. I do not want to miss the opportunity to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to encourage one of his colleagues in the Home Office to consider our case for community radio and to consider whether there is any way in which the Home Office could give us our own frequency. At the same time, will my hon. Friend the Minister have a word with our right hon. Friend the Chancellor to see whether he would consider zero-rating VAT on hospital radio broadcasting

equipment, thereby treating us in the same way as people who are involved in talking books for the blind? We estimated that that would save us about £250,000 a year.

My hon. Friend the Minister may recall answering an Adjournment debate on 24 May 1985 about St. Luke's hospice. My hon. Friends the Member for Norfolk, South-West and the Member for Ealing, North also mentioned the role of hospices. On that occasion, I told my hon. Friend the Minister about the remarkable efforts of a couple called Trudy and Les Cox. I am not aware of any millionaires who live in Basildon. If there are any, they have certainly not come forward to join the Conservative party, because I would have tapped them for a membership fee. By and large the people who are involved in our hospice movement are very ordinary people. In just four years, they have raised more than £650,000 through all sorts of ordinary activities, such as raffles, jumble sales and tombolas. So far the largest donation from any company has been £10,000, for which we are grateful. We have not received any bequests. That money has been raised solely through the hard work of dedicated volunteers.

My hon. Friend the Minister will recall that Trudy and Les Cox were inspired to set up the hospice when they listened to the words of Dame Cicely Saunders who said, "You matter to the last moments of life and we will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but to live until you die". Until I went out recently with Trudy Cox, who is a district nurse, I had not appreciated the fact that not only is she trying to cope with organising the fund-raising activities for the hospice, but she is spending her time visiting people who are actually close to death, which in itself takes a tremendous toll on the individual. Trudy Cox originally started that work because she once knocked on the door of a house, a child came to the door, she went up to the bedroom and found that the mother was in bed dead with her children around her. They had not even realised that their mother had died. She said that, after experiencing that sort of scene, she would ensure that, through the hospice movement, she would never be put in such a position again. I just wanted to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that they are making marvellous headway. Indeed, we hope to open the hospice next autumn.

Mr. John Patten: That is a marvellous story.

Mr. Amess: The Women's Royal Voluntary Service in Basildon is very active and has 500 members. It works in the hospital in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), who unfortunately could not be here today, and to which it has so far given £23,000 worth of equipment, such as portakabins for the hospital grounds. The WRVS provides about 500 meals a week in the area and a luncheon club where all senior citizens from our area are invited to attend a day club. It also organises books on wheels and makes about 30 rounds per week. It will shortly help to start a tea bar in the new Basildon magistrates court. Again, my hon. Friend the Minister had to answer another Adjournment debate about the courthouse in Basildon. He will be delighted to know that Lord Mackay of Clashfern will be opening that courthouse next year. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his efforts in that area. Recently the WRVS supplied clothing, bedding and garments to a number of families who were unfortunately burnt out of their houses in the Felmore part of the constituency. I was delighted that last year one of its members was named in the Queen's honours list.

Basildon hospital League of Friends celebrated its anniversary last year and is an essential element of the voluntary scene in Basildon. It has raised £250,000 since the hospital was opened 25 years ago. It has a membership of roughly 300 people. A small army of volunteers work a five-day week in the hospital in the out-patients' canteen and the ante-natal cafeteria. There are two groups, one group works in the mornings and the other in the afternoons. They are the unpaid, unsung heroines of our hospital in Basildon. Recently they donated £30,000 to the day centre for the treatment of handicapped children. I could mention many other things about that group. One lady, aged 83, is still responsible for organising the volunteers in the ante-natal section.

We also have a branch of the Relate organisation in Basildon. It used to be called the Marriage Guidance Council. Unfortunately we live in a society in which marriage is not as popular as it used to be. I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is in his place because I am sure that he will remember that when he and I were new Members of the House, I was one of those who tried, perhaps cack-handedly, to try to amend the legislation because I was against the reduction in the period before which one could obtain a divorce. I know that the hon. and learned Gentleman sought to intervene on that occasion. I believe that I and my colleagues who have a strong view on the subject have, sadly, been proved right. I am doing all that I possibly can to deal with those single parents in Basildon who are valiantly trying to cope with all the problems that must be faced when a husband or a wife leaves the family. I congratulate the Relate organisation in Basildon on all the voluntary counselling that it gives in the constituency. It is a magnificent organisation.

We all have St. John Ambulance brigades in our constituencies. We take them for granted, but we should not. Their members are always present at sports activities and conferences. They are unpaid enthusiastic volunteers.

I commend also the Samaritans, an organisation founded in 1953. We recognise that its work is secret and its members known by numbers, but they do a magnificent job in being the comforting source on the other end of the telephone. They deal with many traumatic cases and give reassurance whenever they are asked to do so.

I take this opportunity to mention also the national organisation called Life. My views on abortion are known in the House. I applaud the Life organisation which is responsible for dealing with those mothers who have had their babies and who then find that they are in financial difficulties with the care and maintenance of the children. I hope that if my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she might go into some brief details about the excellent work of the Life organisation.

The Scouts and Guides movements in Basildon, as throughout the country are absolutely magnificent. I was a member of the Scouts in Newham until the age of 17. It plays a remarkable role in keeping young minds occupied. Those young people might perhaps be on street corners without it, which is something that I intend to find out in the next few weeks when I participate in the "I love

[Mr. Amess]

Basildon" campaign. We should pay tribute to all the national and local organisers of the Scout and Guide movements.

Basildon Boys Club and the Vange Boys Club are two well-organised groups in the constituency. Their members voluntarily organise young people in sports and leisure activities. They fund-raise week in and week out and they should be congratulated on their work.

Only recently I was asked to open a new centre for the Town Crier organisation in Basildon. It is manned by 30 volunteers who make tapes that blind people can enjoy. Again, I very much applaud their work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North mentioned the British Legion—another magnificent organisation. I very much hope that those people in Basildon who are in a position to do something will listen favourably to the British Legion's reasonable request that we have a permanent war memorial in Basildon. It is not good enough for us just to pay our respects at a tiny insignificant wooden cross. The British Legion very much wants us to have a permanent war memorial, not to glorify war, but to make sure that we never forget and that we never participate in war in the future.

We all have groups of the Rotary Club, the Lions and the Round Table in our constituencies. We should never take their work for granted, whether at Christmas, Whitsun or Easter, when they raise so much money from which local communities can benefit.

The Women's Institute in Basildon is certainly thriving and, again, I applaud its work.

The final organisation that I wish to congratulate is the Crossroads, care attendants scheme, which is responsible on a voluntary basis for giving care to people who have disabled children. It gives counselling advice and looks after the disabled people while the carers can take a holiday.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon on bringing this important matter to the attention of the House today. I applaud every person who is a member of a voluntary organisation. I abhor the very tiny percentage of the British public who, when a tin is rattled in front of them, or when they are asked to support something, say, "I am not going to have any part in it. Why should I? It is up to the state to do it all." That tiny minority of people are those who would not get off their backsides to help anyone. I deplore their attitude.

By far and away the overwhelming majorty of the British public are active citizens and participants in voluntary groups. No town is worth anything without the quality of its citizens, and I am proud that on both counts Basildon has plenty.

12.8 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I shall speak only briefly to say that most hon. Members, irrespective of which political party they belong to, agree that we should support and give aid to voluntary organisations.

I have been a member of voluntary organisations more or less since I was old enough to join one. They have been varied. My first voluntary organisation was the Cubs, then the Scouts, then the Rover Scouts, and then all sorts of other organisations. The voluntary organisations of which I have been a member for longest is the trade union movement. It should not be forgotten that Members of the House are here because we are members of voluntary organisations. Political parties are voluntary organisations; we do not have to join them. We do not have to join the Church. Indeed, we do not have to join anything, but we decide to do so because we want to be active citizens and to play our part in society. On this subject, I agree with much that has been said today by hon. Members whose views on other issues would probably upset me.

The voluntary organisations in my constituency do a magnificent job. Young Church groups—of all religious persuasions, although they were started by Roman catholics—in my constituency raise money to decorate, and look after old people's houses and to be helpful to the old folk in other ways.

An excellent job is also done by the League of Friends of Walton hospital and other great hospitals. The Salvation Army in my area does a first-rate job. I am bound to admit, however, that because of the legislative changes that are being made by the Government, who are abdicating their responsibilities in certain matters, Church groups are beginning to do jobs that they should not have to do.

We must get the balance right between the work of voluntary organisations and the role of the state. I do not want our society to be run by a vast bureaucratic state organisation that has tentacles everywhere, determining what people should and should not do and think. That would be the worst possible society in which to live. It would be George Orwell's "1984" writ large.

It seems that there are tendencies even in our present society to move in that direction. For example, I saw on television last night how it is possible for little pellets to be placed in animals so that they can be traced wherever they go. Human beings are animals. People might want to put pellets in us so that we can be traced all the time. It is a horrific thought. Where is it all leading? I want a society that is a combination of voluntary activity—the active citizenship of the mass of the people—with the state taking a positive role, being responsible for certain groups in society.

I am a non-bureaucratic Socialist, basically what I would call a non-state Socialist. That does not mean that I do not believe in public ownership. I want public ownership to develop in many ways, adopting different ideas, but I do not want to see the creation of a vast bureaucratic society, and I would be the first to oppose such a concept.

I pointed out that I had belonged to many voluntary organisations. I will not name them all, but they include the Royal Air Force Association. There are many others which, if I am not a member of them, I have supported over the years and to which I still regularly give financial aid. They do a magnificent job. But I have supported and been a member of the trade union movement for the greatest length of time.

Whenever I think of voluntary organisations my mind goes back to 1947 when there was a great ship repair strike in Liverpool. About 20,000 of us took part and it lasted six weeks. During the first week, when the strike committee met—the whole thing was voluntary—we discovered that the local old-age pensioners' association had been used to gathering once a week at the Bootle Labour club for an afternoon's meeting. The old folk had not been told that we had taken the club over, and we did not know they were coming.

In the event, lots of elderly people turned up for their meeting. Our senior shop steward and chairman was an Irishman named Michael Head, who had a beautiful tenor voice. He said, "We can't just leave all these old people sitting here. We must do something to entertain them. Let us put on a concert for them this afternoon". We did. He sang, some read poetry, others did juggling or played the piano. I had no idea that among the shop stewards and strikers was so much talent. It was an excellent example of voluntary action to provide the old folk with entertainment.

Throughout that strike we continued to entertain the pensioners every Wednesday at the club. They wanted the strike to go on for ever, though we did not. So popular were the concerts that more and more pensioners turned up each Wednesday afternoon. When the strike was over, many of those who had taken part in the entertainment continued to do voluntary work—not during the daytime because they were working—and, for the rest of their lives many of them went on to be involved in voluntary activities, whereas previously they had not thought much about it.

I commend to hon. Members in all parts of the House, and particularly to Conservative Members, a pamphlet on the role of trade unions which has just been produced by the Catholic Truth Society. It outlines in clear terms the importance of trade unions, and in many ways it is critical of the Government's attitude, policies and legislation on trade union activities. It points out that, in one sense, this great voluntary organisation is being undermined, even stopped in its tracks, by the type of legislation being introduced by the Government.

I supported the Solidarity movement in Poland from the day it was created. I am a passionate believer in solidarity. I do not want the Government to use legislation to stop the voluntary activities of trade unions. I do not want state-run and controlled trade unions. I repeat, I hope that all hon. Members will read that pamphlet, which is based on the teachings of the Church.

Indeed, I must tell those on the Opposition Front Bench who have been producing documents about trade unions that I wish that they, too, would read that pamphlet. It would do them the world of good because it is much better than much of what they have been producing. Such a first-class document is it that I wish they had read it before arriving at some of the ideas that they have, because they are only reflecting what the Government are saying.

Mr. Patten: I hope that I did not mishear the right hon. Gentleman's last remarks. I do not think I caught the names of the documents that he says he does not like, nor the authors of them. Perhaps he will tell the House the names of the people to whom he is referring. It is all a mystery to me, and I cannot imagine to whom he is referring.

Mr. Heffer: Time will tell. All will be revealed about which policies I do not like and about the policies in the documents I mentioned.

I welcome the debate because we should give all possible support to voluntary workers and organisations. They do a magnificent job, particularly those who help in hospitals. For example, they take books to hospitals in Liverpool.

Hon. Members should not be divided on the issue. We must not use voluntary organisations as an excuse for not carrying out the responsibilities that the state must accept. Voluntary organisations cannot solve all the problems.

We used to have voluntary hospitals, and I am glad that there were. When I was 16, I had peritonitis. If the voluntary hospital had not been there, I would not be here now. We could not continue with only voluntary hospitals, we had to establish the National Health Service. It is like building houses for people who cannot afford to buy them. There must be council house-building schemes. The state has an important role to play, but I disagree with those who say, "Do not give anything to voluntary organisations." There must be a balance between the state and voluntary organisations.

For a long time I was a chairman of a theatre group. I did not act, but that caused all sorts of problems. The actors would come to me and say, "I should have had that part." I would say, "it is nothing to do with me; I am only running the organisation, and I have nothing to do with who is in what play." That was the Merseyside Unity theatre. Theatre groups do a magnificent job, whether they are village theatre groups or theatre groups in large cities. They all help to make life better by giving a wider view of society and creating greater understanding.

12.22 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): My remarks will be briefer than I intended, not only because other hon. Members wish to speak, but because the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has been waiting patiently for his opportunity. I have considerable sympathy with him. I know what it is like to sit in the House on a Friday, hoping to speak, and I trust that his wishes will be more fully realised than mine have been this year.

I add to the many and well-deserved congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on securing the debate on this important subject and on an eloquent speech. I apologise to him for having missed his opening comments. I was prevented from being in the House at the time. My hon. Friend has provided an opportunity for a wide discussion for which I am sure the House is grateful.

Much has been said about the ethos of voluntary work. We are dealing with a changing social climate. I reiterate the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). He congratulated the Government on promoting active citizenship and the role of voluntary organisations. Their achievement is more remarkable because it has been brought about at a time of national prosperity. When a nation is prosperous there is always a temptation for people to believe that the state can take care of everything because the money is available to do so. There is a temptation also for an individual in a prosperous society to salve his conscience merely by giving some of his disposable income to charity, rather than by playing an active role. I do not wish to imply any derogatory motives to people who give to charity. Without the considerable funds that charities need, they and other organisations would not be able to carry out their work. Consciences are often salved by putting money in a collection tin, or even by making a regular contribution, and the active part is too often ignored.

It is an achievement for the Government that, at a time of prosperity, they have been able to generate a climate in

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

which active citizenship is regarded as an essential element of everyday life. Proof of that is the growing number of charities in the directory of voluntary organisations, which seems to get fatter each year. That implies that there is growing recognition of the individual citizen's role.

The background against which we are asking citizens to be more active is rather different from that of 20 years ago. Hon. Members have mentioned the decline in church attendance. That has had two effects: first, fewer people are available for voluntary work, and, secondly, it is less easy for people to find the help that they need. When congregations were large and a member of the congregation was in need, it would have been known by the rest of the church population—certainly by the vicar or priest—and action would have been taken before that person even had to ask. Without that base and with the increasing problem of loneliness and people having to cope on their own, there is not such a readily recognisable source of help for those who are suffering. Many of those who are driven to phone the Samaritans and take advantage of organisations that help people who are in despair, because they have not had the ready base of an extended family or of the Church.

The number of working women is increasing. That means that what used to be the natural source of voluntary work, particularly that which is most easily done by day, is drying up. With more mothers and grandmothers working, fewer people have time on their hands. I do not absolve men from their responsibilities in active citizenship, but it is generally recognised that housewives used to play an important part in social and welfare work and simply keeping an eye on the neighbours. They are no longer such a common feature of society.

Also, many families are breaking up into small units, so there are not the large families with a ready recognition of needs that there used to be. That has meant that more old people look to society rather than to their families for support. More old people are living on their own rather than receiving the care and attention of a large family.

I grew up in a generation whose grandparents were looked after at home—my grandmother was at home throughout my childhood—and I feel that the change is something of a loss to society. The daily mix of young and old, promoting an understanding of old people's interests, was a crucial education for me, although I was not aware of it at the time.

Although I appreciate that today such concerns are mainly the province of the Home Office, it is essential for us to inculcate in children from the start the ethos of looking after their neighbour and trying to find what he or she requires. In my constituency, Maidstone grammar school for girls has won itself a well-deserved reputation for the immense amount of social care and loving work performed by its girls. That work is often unsung, so I am grateful to have the opportunity to publicise it today.

I did not learn of the girls' work directly from them; I learnt of it by encountering the fruits of it, sometimes in the most amazing places. When, for example, I visited the Crisis at Christmas centre last Christmas, I was told that all the preparations—food, bedding and so forth—had been assembled by the girls, who had got up at 6.30 am on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to make those preparations.

I thought that I had been brought up to a tradition of service, but I know that if, as a girl of 15 or 16, I had been asked to get up at 6.30 on Christmas morning, go to a relatively cold and unwelcoming place and warm it up and then do several hours' work, I would have taken a rather jaundiced view. Yet those girls did it voluntarily, and their work is deeply appreciated.

I have also visited Guide Dogs for the Blind, of whose Maidstone branch I am president. It has been trying to raise funds for a new training centre, and, indeed, has succeded in doing so. There I met the head girl of Maidstone grammar school—which by then did not surprise me, as the girls seem to pop up wherever there is such work to be done. It transpired that, not through sponsorship—that is, using other people's money—but through their own efforts and direct fund-raising, they had managed to raise enough money to train a guide dog. That is a remarkable achievement, the more so because it is only one of many. On another occasion, when I called on some old people in almshouses, I was told that the girls from the grammar school had just been round with some harvest offerings.

If every school taught such work as naturally as Maidstone girls' grammar and its splendid deputy headmistress Mrs. McCabe, we would found a society in which active citizenship would become even more important. Those girls are taught to operate as individuals. They are not part of a voluntary organisation for which collecting tins are produced; they are putting in their own efforts. Much has been said today about the relationship between charities and the state—always a fraught relationship—but the relationship between the individual and charities is also extremely important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon spoke of the role that the citizen can play as an individual in combating crime. The one set of crime statistics that has undeniably shown a fall—although Opposition Members sometimes seek rather ungraciously to deride it—is the burglary statistics. The number of burglaries has undoubtedly declined: equally undoubtedly, much of that is due to the functioning of neighbourhood watch schemes.

We have an extremely efficient neighbourhood watch in Maidstone, and I was involved in setting up an equally efficient one in Fulham. Not only does the scheme deter burglars—which, after all, is its main purpose—but it calls citizens together, makes them aware of each other's needs and encourages them to play an active role. The alertness of an individual and his willingness to interfere and become involved is crucial to combating crime.

I am rather sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon is not present, as I am going to criticise an attitude which seems prevalent in society and which is backed up by the police and by official Home Office advice. I think that it has dangers. The following advice is enshrined in documentation from the police to the general public; if someone tries to snatch your handbag, let it go, because if you resist you may end up with some such injury as a dislocated shoulder.

That is the wrong advice. We are encouraging a social lack of will to combat crime. The criminal will not be deterred mainly by the thought of detection, although that is important, or by the thought of punishment, because that is often much too light these days, but by the fact that he will encounter resistance. Much street robbery and opportunistic crime is carried out on the spur of the moment because the individual is convinced that he will

not meet with resistance. Therefore, we have created a society in which girls have handbags snatched on the Underground and nobody goes to their assistance, people are attacked, or even raped, in the street, the attack is witnessed, but nobody goes to their assistance. By that advice, we are creating a social attitude that we should not become involved and it is dangerous to interfere.

There is a happy medium between the gung-ho advice of, "Have a go, no matter what the risks" and the attitude of the priest and the Levites of old, who passed by on the other side of the street. There is no need to swing from one set of advice to another. The question whether to resist an attack or weigh in to help somebody who is being attacked is an individual decision. Official advice should not be given telling us to go a different way.

There must be a social will so that where we see crime, we try to stop it by the appropriate means. There are plenty of examples of valiant old ladies beating off burglars, much to the amazement of the burglars—not the old ladies—and of crime being stopped by children and the weaker members of society who rally round to help. It is up to all of us to do so. Any incident in which somebody is attacked in public and not helped, shames us all. That is why the Guardian Angels were greeted with cheers when they appeared.

Whatever reservations my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon may have expressed about the role of the Guardian Angels, that is the citizens' way of reacting to a situation that they are no longer prepared to tolerate. Whatever suspicions he or the police may have towards the Guardian Angels, the very same suspicions were held about Securicor, which is now regarded as a respectable and established everyday fact of life and an organisation which backs up the role of order in society.

Individual alertness and involvement are as important in crime as they are in the voluntary organisations, on which much of the debate has tended to concentrate. We should consider some of the voluntary organisations and their work because through them active citizenship can support and enhance the basic work of the state.

I shall take up the offer of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon to comment on the organisation, Life. It is appropriate for me to comment on this organisation because one of its largest branches is located in Maidstone. It is tempting to think that Life merely acts as a political campaign, pressuring for the sort of changes in the law that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and I wish to bring about. However, while other organisations do that, Life has a large, ever-growing and extremely expensive-to-run charitable wing that looks after the needs of mothers who face unwanted or unexpected pregnancies.

The Maidstone branch of Life is run by an extremely remarkable man, Denis Neale. He is remarkable not only for the work that he has done for Life but for the personal circumstances in which he undertakes the work. Last year, when the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) was introducing his Bill to curb late abortions, a large rally was organised in Maidstone which the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, representatives of various churches and I were to attend. There were nearly 1,000 people involved in the rally and an enormous amount of organisation and co-ordination was involved including, for example, the co-ordination of the different churches, interest groups and charities, as well as the general public. That was a time-consuming task.

Two weeks before the rally took place, Denis Neale's teenage daughter was involved in a car accident that left her paralysed for life. Denis Neale carried on at the wish of his brave young daughter, Vicky, and other members of his family. He continued with the goal he had set himself of organising the rally, and he has carried on since in the long-term purposes that he set himself—to make life easier for the young girls who find themselves pressurised by families into taking a course that they do not want to take. After that, some of them have to manage for themselves, sometimes in severe poverty and deprivation.

The counselling work that Life does for young girls who have been thus pressurised, sometimes, alack, comes too late. They have already had the abortion into which they were pressurised and they arrive at Life much too late, suffering from grief, guilt, uncertainty, fear and misery. In Sheffield, where Life has a massive organisation, there lives a young lady who is so distressed by what has happened that she can no longer pass the offices of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service. She has been known to collapse outside them and to be an hour late for work because she has to make a wide detour around them. The state offers her nowhere to go, but she can go to Life. I hope that the friends whom she has found there will continue to supply her with the necessary support to lead a much happier life.

Some needs are obvious, others are not. A part of charities' role is sometimes to draw attention to aspects that the state has overlooked but which, after a few years, it then starts to deal with. A good example of that was the charity for battered wives, who have been a fact of life for centuries without having been recognised by the state as a group in need of special provision. Erin Pizzey and the charity for battered wives drew their plight to the state's attention, and the state has since recognised it and acted accordingly.

All sorts of people work towards these unrecognised ends. We are familiar with the splendid work done by organisations such as MENCAP, which operates very effectively in Maidstone. I also commend much smaller initiatives, such as the organisation called Spadework in Maidstone. It was set up specifically to cope with the needs of mentally handicapped youngsters who, having come of age, can no longer rely on the special provision of the state but are not ill enough to be institutionalised. They need some form of activity from which to earn their living, in the same way as the rest of us. Spadework set up an organisation that sent out groups of mentally handicapped girls and boys to do gardening. They look after people's gardens and charge a proper rate for the job. The organisation is run almost entirely by volunteers; the girls and boys must be supervised, work has to be found for them and the whole effort needs co-ordination. If for nothing else, I am grateful to them because they sorted out my garden not long ago——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Would they do mine?

Miss Widdecombe: I am sure that they would be delighted to do the hon. and learned Gentleman's garden, but it would be rather a long way to go. I suggest that he has a similar organisation set up in his constituency, whereafter I am sure the youngsters will attend to his garden first.

[Miss Widdecombe]

Active church groups do a great deal. I am especially grateful for the work of Dave King and his support group in Maidstone, which does so much on the council estates and in the less well-off areas for those in need.

There is a wide range of support schemes for families and for the victims of crime. The state has followed the lead of the charitable sector, and it is now generally recognised that the victim's problems do not end if and when the criminal is apprehended and convicted, or when the police close the file on the solved or unsolved case. That is another example in which charities are leading the state.

For all those reasons the work of voluntary organisations is important. But each voluntary organisation is comprised of individuals. One does not have to belong to a voluntary organisation to look after the needs of one's neighbour. We should teach our children from an early age to do simple things, such as doing the shopping for the old lady who lives down the road, and not just to leave the shopping on the kitchen table and go home, but to stay and talk and provide the companionship which that old lady may need. As they get older, children should be encouraged to do voluntary work, as the girls from Maidstone grammar school do. People should not use having a full-time job or having to look after a family as an excuse for non-active involvement.

We should all ask ourselves what we do for our neighbours apart from our paid jobs—I include in that Members of Parliament. Those who do not take on an immediately active role where they see need have no business to criticise the state for its lack of provision, or the number of people employed in any particular job, and ultimately have no business whatsoever to expect to rely on the neighbours whom they have not served.

12.46 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): We have had a wide-ranging debate and a wide range of agreement. I agree particularly with my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) who suggested that Members of Parliament should lead the way and contribute to the voluntary sector.

I was surprised that the debate that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) initiated so ably followed some of the lanes down which it has travelled, not least when the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) spoke. Of course he was quite right to say that the trade union movement is a voluntary membership movement, but I shall not dwell on his eloquent opposition to the closed shop. I absolutely support his last point about the theatre and the role of the arts in society. He also referred to his membership of the Cubs. I, too, started my voluntary work as a Cub and I suppose that many of us can dyb, dyb, dyb and dob, dob, dob, together. Perhaps that sums up what is best in our society—doing our best for our fellow members of society in Britain.

We have talked about the beneficiaries and the organisers of voluntary work. But the crucial, key point is the role of the individual contributing as best he or she can. Very often the individual has a role at home, looking after the family, and as members of the family become elderly or disabled, that role is extended. People also play such a role at work, often through the vocational nature of their work. We should not underestimate the voluntary spirit when people give up a high salary to take on a role which they feel is more rewarding to themselves and to the people whom they serve. Many people use their spare time in a multiplicity of ways, taking on the role of the professional supporter of people in the community.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) asked Conservative Members about whom we were talking when we mentioned people who played a role in the voluntary sector. I suggest to him that everyone has such a role. It is a question not of financial status, but of individual will to use one's skill and abilities. I include those who, in theory, we think we are helping when, often, they are the very people who have something to contribute as providers of support and as contributors to their fellow sufferers. We should not, for example, underestimate the role of the disabled as voluntary helpers to their fellow human beings. Everyone has a role.

Mr. Randall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. Does he recall that at the Conservative party conference last year the Home Secretary, when speaking of the role of citizens, suggested three ways in which they could provide help—first, being a parent governor of a school; secondly, involvement in neighbourhood watch; and thirdly, charitable giving. How does the hon. Gentleman think everyone would fit into those slots?

Mr. Bowis: It is obvious that not everyone can be a parent governor—he or she would have to be a parent with a child at school. Therefore, only a limited range of people could fill such a slot. I warmly support the role of individuals in their children's schools, in crime prevention and in other aspects of society, and also an individual's giving to charity and charitable giving as a whole. It may be the rich man, with his eye-of-the-needle problem, who should be giving more or it may be the widow's mite, which is just as valuable. I do not wish to discuss the party conference debate last October. It is important to accept that everyone has a role.

I wish to dwell for a moment on the way in which young people can contribute. Indeed, I am involved with certain organisations in that area. I think especially of an event in which I participated yesterday afternoon at the Emanuel school in my constituency, which is sited on the banks of the railway line where the Clapham junction train disaster occurred last December. I went to support the school and the many people who attended the unveiling of the memorial to the disaster, which was carried out jointly by one of the boys of the school and a survivor of the train crash. As we stood there—silent other than for the sound of passing trains below the edge of the embankment—our minds returned to that early morning when the crash occurred. We remembered the way in which those young boys and their teachers immediately went down the embankment, at some risk to themselves, to give comfort and succour. They were, first, saving lives; secondly, comforting the injured; and thirdly, supporting the rescue services. They did that not because they were organised to do so, but because they perceived a need. They understood how they, as individuals, could respond to that need, and they did so. It is an example of the best in our society when people of all ages, under all conditions, perceive a need and respond to it.

While standing on the embankment during the unveiling of the memorial I was reminded of another occasion some years ago—less publicised and less sung—when there were great winter floods. At that time I was staying in my in-law's village in Warwickshire. The brook overflowed into nearby houses, one of which was occupied by an old lady. The village joined together and found shelter for her. However, that was not the end of the story; it was not just the British coming together. That lady's next-door neighbours, a young couple, went into the house and took out all the damp and ruined items, dried what was reclaimable and replaced those that were not. They then got out their pots of paint and redecorated the house so that when the old lady returned she would feel that it was her home, and not experience the aftermath of disaster that makes such experiences so much more traumatic. That is an example of young people perceiving a problem, believing that they could put it right and doing so.

Earlier this week, I visited the Cancer Research Campaign, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). Every year it holds a major fund-raising event in Battersea park. I was there to present prizes and publicise the triple challenge that will take place this summer. It is a tremendously successful organisation that raises millions of pounds and is almost self-sufficient. The event was a combination of a professional fund-raising organisation and two sponsors, to which I pay tribute—Whitbread and the London Broadcasting Company. I pay tribute to the role that local radio stations play in London. LBC and Capital Radio have fine charitable connections with Battersea park. A well-run charity, industry and young people came together to raise money for a problem that they understood. My hon. Friends rightly said that people understand because, sadly, problems are brought home to them through their families and friends.

I was speaking to an organisation earlier this week called Projects by the Blind (Wandsworth), which is in my constituency. It provides reading and newspaper tapes for the blind and partially sighted. It provides a centre for companionship for such people during the day and offers creative work for those who can manage it, some of whom are partially sighted and some completely blind. The organisation has an element of self-help supported by the community. I used to call it "Projects for the Blind", but it proudly said "No, we are called Projects by the Blind". The blind help themselves with society's support. With a little help, pump-priming and back-up, such people are able to contribute to their wellbeing.

I work with other organisations that go way beyond our national shores and deal with the problems of the world, such as Hungry for Change and Results. They aim to find solutions to the massive global problems, and its results are so huge that one might find them difficult to comprehend. If it is broken down into the cost of saving a child's sight or rehydration tablets to cure diarrhoea, which can cause death, and one considers the cost of immunising a child, one realises how simply and cheaply British people can assist by saving or adopting a child elsewhere in the world.

If we can persuade individuals that there is a problem, as soon as they are aware of it, they understand it. If we can achieve solutions that are manageable to them, we shall begin to get movement. There is a range of problems, many of which have been mentioned in the debate, but there is a range of solutions, some of which cost nothing. It costs nothing to assist someone who is being attacked in the street—a matter that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone. I mentioned the boys of Emanuel school. It costs only time and effort to help.

Support, by means of cash in kind, is required from the public, various agencies and local government. Sometimes the cost is vast. Sometimes the cost is in terms of assisting the carer to take a break. We know about the virtues of respite. That is a form of pump-priming that we should not ignore. If money is directed towards solving the problems at a level that people can understand, they will respond and we shall begin to overcome some of the problems.

Hon. Members have referred to the difficult balancing act that has to be performed. There is a danger that state support can sometimes supplant the voluntary spirit. We need to examine the extent to which the state is taking over the solving of problems. Individuals who previously were involved and who would like to be involved again in voluntary work no longer feel that they are wanted and needed. There is a danger, as voluntary organisations increasingly become the agents of central and local government, that that feeling will grow.

Mr. Randall: Based on my own experience, I see exactly the opposite trend. In my own city, the financial constraints that have been imposed upon local authorities as a result of rate capping and other measures have led to the local authority's role being considerably diminished.

Mr. Bowis: That may be true in some cases.

Reference has been made to the voluntary hospital services. The hon. Member for Walton referred to them. When there were cottage hospitals the local community was very willing to support them. However, when cottage hospitals became part of the regional health service, the local community began to feel that they were no longer welcome and that they could not continue to support such a small part of a vast organisation.

I am not suggesting that we should go overboard either way; we have to get the balance right. Too often nowadays the first question asked by a voluntary organisation is, "Who will fund us?" The first question used to be, "How shall we raise the money?" Voluntary organisations now say that they want full time staff and premises. It is getting slightly out of balance. We ought to concentrate on those who benefit from the services and ensure that the resources that are available are devoted to them.

Society has to be careful about the extent to which it interferes. I support and have a high opinion of the dial-a-ride service. Unfortunately, it is now in danger of becoming bureaucratised. The need is seen to be so large that it is beyond the scope of any individual or voluntary organisation to cater for it. Consequently, the dial-a-ride service is looking to national and local agencies to provide support.

Another danger is that the bureaucrats tend to dictate to the users of the services what is in their best interests. The users of the dial-a-ride service are disabled. On the whole, dial-a-ride is very good at listening to the disabled because it is a local service. Increasingly, however, as London Regional Transport takes over the management of dial-a-ride in London there is a danger that it will want to provide a neat package that is suitable for the whole of London. It does not want to hear about the preferences of disabled people in my part of London. The service is in danger of being swallowed up by bureaucracy. The

[Mr. Bowis]

individuals whom we are seeking to help will suffer. There has to be a balance between the desire to assist and the rights of the individuals who are being assisted—the right of the disabled to mobility. Without wishing to take matters too far the other way, we must get the balance right between the individual contributor to charity and voluntary work and the role of the state.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone said, if we are considering ways in which the individual can become more involved, we must go back to the schools. She rightly highlighted some of the schemes at Maidstone grammar school, where the girls do great community projects. I also wonder whether we should not look at the role of children within schools. In my day, there was a greater role for the pupil in the management of the school, cleaning, washing dishes and helping with the grounds, play areas and sports fields. I do not want to undermine the role of the school caretaker, but children seem to be brought up to assume that everything will be done by the caretaker. When they become householders, they will look at the snow that has fallen on the pavement, on which old people could fall, and they will say that it is the role of society to clear the snow. As President Kennedy said, we should ask not what our fellow man can do for us, but what we can do for our fellow man, and that is the message we want to put across.

Another aspect of voluntary work is that concerned with crime. I point out to my hon. Friend the Minister that nowhere in London shows better success in beating crime than my area of Battersea. The police, the community, Wandsworth council, local firms and residents' associations have all got together to defeat crime. That is an example of voluntary action supported by the state locally and nationally.

I also support the point made earlier about the role of industry in supporting projects. In Battersea, a firm called Skillion decided that it would play a part by sponsoring some of the clean-up of the River Thames. It persuaded me to join various young people from Manpower in taking out some of the rubbish from the river bed. That was a splendid operation and should be repeated by other firms locally. In Wandsworth, we have signs which say, "Wandsworth the brighter borough environmental improvement scheme." Wandsworth council does that because it is a well-run council. I suggest that firms could do that as well, and we should then see signs saying, "Woolworth encouraging the brighter borough with the improvement scheme." Why should not the firms that became involved take some of the credit?

Moving up the age range, I wonder why we do not make more use of the skills of retired people. As the age of retirement comes down, so there is an increasing reserve of skills we should use. In further education, those practical skills are already used and secondary schools could do the same, as could the many areas of need in the community. I suggest to my hon. Friend that he could promote through his colleagues the idea that every local authority should build up a register of skills and volunteers available, which should be tied in with the needs of the voluntary sector. Such a register would bring everybody together in the community to contribute and we should have played a valuable part.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising this topic. As Members of Parliament, we see the best of voluntary organisations in our constituencies and we see some magnificent work. If we come back to that moment at Emanuel school, we see that the best work of all is when an individual sees a problem and goes out to do something about it on his own initiative.

1.9 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I join those who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on the motion. I am sorry that I could not be here for the early part of the debate.

I particularly welcome the way in which my hon. Friend has worded the motion. Too often our discussions of voluntary organisations turn to thoughts on what they should or should not be doing, on which there is a division of opinion. Some fear that voluntary organisations will carry out functions that should more properly be carried out by public bodies, while others appear to suggest that they should be carrying out functions that could be carried out by public bodies under their statutory powers.

I particularly welcome the fact that the motion simply celebrates the existence of active citizenship and voluntary activities. That is an appropriate emphasis. Judging by my constituency experience there is a mass of flourishing voluntary organisations of all sorts—on the whole happily and effectively doing what they set out to do and not particularly worried about the discussions that I have just described. They can see that there is a job for them to do and they get on with doing it.

I am fortunate in having two remarkable voluntary organisations in my constituency which provide me with accommodation for my surgery. Unlike many hon. Members, I suspect, I hold my surgeries in premises owned by voluntary organisations. That is a way of showing the importance that I attach to their work.

I was interested by what my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) said about the role of a voluntary activity in keeping law and order. I share her reaction to what was said when the Guardian Angels came to England recently. It was interesting to note that, whatever the official reaction may have been—from the police and other authorities, there was quite considerable support among the public at large for the idea of active citizenship as represented by the Guardian Angels. I am aware that American experience of the work of the Guardian Angels varies but when I went to the west coast of America, I found what I saw of their activities impressive and thought that it justified the public's reaction.

I welcome the greater emphasis on volunteer work by the Metropolitan Police. In areas of south London the police have accepted a role for a form of special constable working with neighbourhood watch schemes. That is an interesting development which could well be copied by other areas that are interested in incorporating the services of volunteers in the process of keeping law and order. Similarly, I am interested in the announcement made in the past few days about a new type of volunteer in the Metropolitan police, who will be dressed quite differently from a police constable, in a uniform that the public can easily identify as being that of a volunteer.

I was interested in the exchange between the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) about the extent of involvement throughout the community in voluntary work and in the concept of whether there was any social limitation on the activity of the active citizen. I share completely the attitude of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea that there is a role for the active citizen throughout the community. I believe that, wherever one is living, there is a role for the active citizen.

I would like to stress the role of the active citizen in relation to the environment and to pay tribute to the work of the amenity societies throughout the country and to the Civic Trust. I have been heavily involved for many years in the amenity society where I live. I believe that the environment of an area very much reflects the activity over the years of active involved citizens. Areas with consistently active citizenship in relation to the environment and proposals for an area have often managed to retain their character and their amenities and have reasonably sympathetic forms of development around them.

In areas where that is more difficult, there is still a role for the active citizen. In the past two or three years I have been especially concerned with the problems caused on council estates by thoroughly anti-social tenants. Very often, a minority of anti-social tenants makes life a misery, rather than a pleasure, for a great number of people living around them, especially in blocks of flats, but also on housing estates. I am delighted when I see one or more residents prepared to stand up to that conduct—to complain, to organise neighbours to bring it to a stop and, if necessary, to galvanise the local authority into taking action, if necessary by threatening or bringing eviction proceedings. Unless such anti-social behaviour is tackled, very often there is little remedy for the living conditions of the people concerned. It is a counsel of despair to say that all the others should move out and get transfers rather than be willing to face up to the problem in the first instance. I applaud those active citizens who are prepared to take action and to give evidence against anti-social tenants.

I am happy to say that the local authority in my area is eventually prepared to respond, where it is satisfied that there is a sufficient number of people genuinely concerned about the behaviour of anti-social tenants and willing to give evidence and to do something about it. That is an important element of active citizenship which applies in places where living conditions are extremely difficult. The role of an active citizen is potentially one of great importance when it comes to improving such an environment for large numbers of people.

I welcome the debate and I associate myself with all the remarks about the importance, the role and, indeed, the flourishing character of voluntary organisations. However much time we may spend developing and talking about statutory functions, which must inevitably happen in parliamentary debates, it is good that we have spent some little time talking about those things that we would regard as fundamentally important and, perhaps, even more important than many of the matters that we have to spend very much more time discussing.

1.19 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston Upon Hull, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) on bringing this motion before the House today. It has been interesting to hear the views of hon. Members of all parties, although I note that most speeches have come from Conservative Members. That is probably because this subject was promulgated by the Home Secretary last October when he made a major speech at the Conservative party conference on the active citizen in the context of crime prevention.

Three hon. Members have made particularly interesting points. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) talked about getting the balance right, which is at the nub of this whole issue. Although we have heard hon. Members of all parties talk about the various organisations that we all have in our constituencies and the benefits of them—the Christian ethic has come through strongly—I believe that there is a strong political element at the heart of this matter and that is what I should like to address.

This is a philosophical issue. The hon. Member for Wimbledon made an excellent speech in getting his case over. I am not saying that I agree with him, but he made a number of philosophical points that I should like to address. Essentially, I believe that at the heart of this matter is the balance between the role of the state and that of the voluntary organisations.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because I have waited all morning for the privilege of raising this point. Today I received a letter from the Scotttish Council for Voluntary Organisations, expressing great interest in this important debate and enclosing a five-point charter for the voluntary sector. I should like my hon. Friend's comments on two of those points. The first point relates to the acceptance of the voluntary sector as a complement to, not a substitute for, state provision. The second point relates to the need to recognise that independent voluntary sector comment is vital to our democracy. In other words, voluntary groups should not simply be seen to be participating actively in communities; they believe that people's views about how to shape our society and about Government policy are also important. Does my hon. Friend agree with those observations?

Mr. Randall: Yes, I do. There is no doubt in my mind that there can be no dispute about the importance of the active citizen and the voluntary organisations in which such people tend to work, although of course, they do not belong to organisations. There can be no dispute across the House about that matter. I would support general acceptance of that view on democratic matters.

A number of philosophical points hinge on the question of balance. I believe that individualism must be allowed to flourish; that bureaucracy must be controlled and that people who work in the areas to which hon. Members have referred must be given every opportunity to do their job properly. What we have seen from the Conservative party —this is where it becomes political—has been its expression of the way in which the roles of the state and the voluntary and charitable organisations fit in with its views of Victorian values and with the notion of Lady Bountiful dishing out the goodies——

Mr. John Patten: That is 1960s claptrap.

Mr. Randall: I am sure that when the Minister of State replies to the debate he will be able to address that point.

Even newspapers such as *The Sunday Times*, which is hardly a Labour-supporting newspaper, are expressing views about the shift towards Victorian values and philanthropy being the thing of the day. Towards the end of his speech, the hon. Member for Wimbledon said that during what he claimed to be the present period of greater prosperity, the well-off should share their financial benefits with others. His remarks had a philanthropic ring about them.

I refer to the notion that the wealthy—the top 2 or 3 per cent. who have done very well thank you out of the Government's tax regime—should help out and give. We have heard how charitable giving has been on the increase while the role of the state has been cut back, all expressed in terms of the removal of the dependency culture and so on.

We have an ultra-capitalist Government who are very Right-wing—that is clear and nobody would dispute it—and who are pursuing avidly their philosophy of rolling back the frontiers of the state. That has been manifested in the way in which local authorities have been constrained. Indeed, the whole of the public sector has been constrained and, as a result, we are witnessing the failure of large areas of social policy. That, in turn, is causing a breakdown of law and order.

That is why a Home Office Minister has been present throughout, and will reply to the debate. This is a home affairs matter. The Government see the voluntary organisations as the mechanism to overcome anti-social, criminal, unacceptable behaviour in society. That is what it is all about, and the Home Secretary made that clear at the last Conservative party conference and at a meeting of the Industrial Society earlier in the year.

We have heard some commendable speeches, and the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) made a balanced and moderate speech.

Mr. Bowis: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for that comment.

Mr. Randall: It is sometimes awful to receive praise from the opposite side of the House. The hon. Gentleman made a wise speech which fitted in with the direction in which we should be going. There was, however, in his and other Conservative speeches, a certain amount of goody-goody stuff, and I say that not in a disparaging way.

Hon. Members have been addressing the whole question of the ethos of how individuals should operate in society. If Conservative Members want to see pupils cleaning the schools—*[Interruption.]* I remember serving the custard during school dinner time. I am not complaining about remarks that have been made on that score or about the need for people to have a feeling of responsibility. The Christian ethos came through, and I totally support that.

All of that was good stuff, but until my right hon. Friend the Member for Walton spoke, I felt that the debate was rather off-beam, with the Conservative argument being presented with emphasis on their ultra-capitalist way of running the economy, with their obsession for the market, which is causing a breakdown in society. The degree of homelessness, crime and so on is making many people, including Conservatives, react to the sort of society we now have. As I say, the voluntary organisations are seen as a mechanism for countering that.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Will the hon. Gentleman explain how the description of my hon. Friends of people from all sections of society who are happy to give their time for nothing fits in with his description of a capitalist society?

Mr. Randall: Many people, including most hon. Members, are prepared to give their time. I welcome philanthropy, but I do not want society to be dependent on it. Much has been said about the way in which companies give. I welcome charitable giving, but what happens when an economy drops? Economies are cyclical. If certain services are reliant on that kind of giving, it must be consistent. If there is a recession and profitability drops, charitable giving will become vulnerable and we will let down people. The hon. Lady's argument has serious defects. State funding should be encouraged.

The interaction between the state and voluntary organisations is important. The participation of people in voluntary organisations clearly shows that there tends to be a higher rate of participation when a local authority is involved. From our experience in voluntary organisations, hon. Members know that a core of a few full-time people adds a terrific stimulus to an organisation and makes it more effective.

I do not know where the hon. Member for Wimbledon got the subject of the debate. Perhaps it came from the Whips' Office. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members now want to push the subject as part of their underlying philosophy, because of the failure of social policy in this country.

Mr. John Patten: That is a monstrous allegation.

Mr. Randall: The Minister will have an opportunity to comment.

Why have the Conservatives waited 10 years to do this? The oil money has been flowing for some time. The reason is that the Government are in schtuck over the crime figures. Violent crime figures are still rising, and the Government do not know what to do. That is at the heart of the issue.

As a result of the Government's extreme economic policy, society is divided. No hon. Member would argue that it is not greedy and selfish, and that self-interest prevails. That is the essence of Thatcherism—"I'm all right, Jack; pull the ladder up."

Mr. Ground: Is not the debate the complete antithesis of what the hon. Gentleman has said? The people who are involved in the great mass of voluntary organisations doing things for other people are not behaving as the hon. Gentleman suggests that they should.

Mr. Randall: The hon. and learned Gentleman made an interesting speech. He said that he wanted all people involved as active citizens. I share his view. However, it is difficult to get people to participate when they are losing out. How do we get the homeless, those living in poverty, those who have drug or alcohol problems, and split families to participate? We do not. They are trying to survive day by day. The Government's social policy, which has emanated from their extreme economic policy, has resulted in a role for voluntary organisations and the

active citizen. All I am saying is that in a divided society it is much more difficult to motivate people to give encouragement to others.

Mr. Ground: I am sorry to interrupt a second time; but one of the voluntary organisations of which I spoke—the Feltham community association—is providing work and activity for those who are unemployed and find it difficult to obtain employment.

Mr. Randall: Voluntary organisations are taking up many of the problems, but the Government's funding policy is preventing much of that work. The operation of the community programme has resulted in 16 voluntary workers in my city losing full-time jobs, and in the ending of much good social work. The Government have placed emphasis on projects connected with economic development, and on capital rather than social programmes.

Active citizenship should not be limited to the prosperous and beneficent minority whom the Conservative party generally wishes to perform that role —the "crumbs from the table" syndrome. The Government tell people that it is their duty, and we welcome that, but those who talk of duty should also talk of rights. The recipients of voluntary services should have certain rights. I have not time to go into detail, but I believe that everyone should have the right to a reasonably decent house, good health, education and, in the case of the elderly and those unable to cope, proper care. We have not really defined the active citizen today, and perhaps the definition is too complicated for us, but we have not defined rights either—although I do not think that the Conservative party would support that notion in any event.

How far do the Government want to go in charitable giving? That is an important philosophical question. I think that when my hon. Friend the Member for Walton talked about the balance, he was referring indirectly to the relationship between the public sector and the voluntary sector, supported by charitable giving. I fear that the thinkers and researchers in the Conservative party want to dispense with local authorities and arrange for all the work to be done by the voluntary sector, although whether it is able to do so will depend on a number of economic factors. I find that prospect very worrying: I think it is immoderate. Local government is being prevented from doing good work. I know that the Minister will agree when I say that my local authority in Hull is excellent. Its members are terrific people, and their good work has been hampered.

I have mentioned social policy. The Secretary of State for Social Security said in a speech yesterday that welfare groups would find poverty in paradise. That does not help the position; we are talking about people who are essentially losers. We must ensure that voluntary organisations are funded properly, for a service of adequate quality cannot be provided otherwise.

The debate has been interesting and I congratulate the hon. Member for Wimbledon on initiating it. I also congratulate the voluntary sector on the terrific work that it does in Britain generally. Everyone should be an active citizen. We must establish the framework of how we run this country's economy and—as my hon. Friend the Member for Walton said—we must keep in perspective the balance between the voluntary sector, aided by charities, and the public sector.

The Government have developed their policy to combat crime, and we welcome that. However, so far the policy has created inequality and a divided society and has not solved the problems. Until we get rid of the Government and have a more moderate economic policy in this country, I am afraid that matters will continue to deteriorate and the Minister will still have to cope with the high levels of crime in this country.

1.41 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) referred to his days doling out custard at school. I hoped that with the onset of convenience Socialism, he might dole out a few new-style Labour party policies about the active citizen and the voluntary sector but, alas, we heard nothing new during his speech. The one thing he said with which I could agree was that it was good fortune that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Mr. Goodson-Wickes) was successful in finding time for his debate today and for propounding his thesis with clarity and eloquence. All hon. Members in the Chamber are pleased to have been here for the debate.

The theme of the debate was one that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon developed in his notable maiden speech and it is an interest that he has held consistently since he came to this place. Therefore, it was all the more insulting for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West to suggest that the topic was foisted on my hon. Friend. If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West has any decency, he will stand up and I shall give way to give him the opportunity to apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon.

Mr. Randall: I do not need to apologise to the House. If there was anything offensive in what I said, I would apologise. The hon. Member for Wimbledon and I know each other from Committees. The Government are determined to have this policy accepted because of the failure of their economic policy and the crime that has ensued.

Mr. John Patten: If the hon. Gentleman is not going to apologise, he should sit down and not waste the time of the House.

There is an ancient history to the concept of active citizenship. People have long wanted to help their fellow men and women in their village, community or town. It is a concept with which we are familiar and is not something new that has been dreamt up by the Conservative Government. From the time of Rousseau, philosophers such as Burke, Lincoln, and Ralf Dahrendorf, have talked in their writings about the active citizen.

In an amazingly lightweight effort, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West said that he did not know what an active citizen was. I had better give him a definition that he can chew over. I borrow it from an excellent article that I wrote—for nothing—on the subject in *The Guardian* six or eight months ago. My definition of active citizens is that they are, quite simply, those who make something more than a solely economic contribution to their communities. They not only care and say they do, but act on their caring instincts. The crux of the definition is that, for them, good will is necessary but not sufficient,

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and the contribution that they make is one that is clearly visible, even if not always measurable in a quantifiable sense.

Active citizens act for a range of reasons—to help others, to put their skills to the best possible use and to enjoy the active life and rewards that go with voluntary work, for instance. It can be very enjoyable to make new friends, to undergo training, to learn new skills and, above all, to help others. I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) about that.

Many of those who come within the category of active citizens would not necessarily recognise themselves as such. They would certainly not expect their daily activities to be debated on the Floor of the House, which is why I welcome the opportunity that my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon has given us today.

In many ways the model active citizen—the idea of the volunteer, the productivity of the volunteer, the free-thinking nature of the volunteer, the innovative way in which volunteers do things—has served as a paradigm for the Government when developing our thinking in recent years about the importance of devolving power from the centre to communities and individuals. As several of my hon. Friends have said, there are numerous examples of that in Government policies of recent years —school governors, the opportunities for NHS hospitals to become self-governing units, the opportunities that my noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside is giving to people in housing co-operatives and housing management units to run their own affairs. So the Government have learnt from the good example of the active citizen and the voluntary sector and an appreciation of that has been evident in all the contributions today, through which I intend to run in the order in which they were made.

I turn first to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) not only because he spoke first but because he is leaving shortly to be an active citizen in his work with the National Records Office. He raised two important points: the first was the need for adequate funding for the voluntary sector from the Government. I should remind him that public sector support for the voluntary sector now runs at £2 billion and direct grants given by central Government to the voluntary sector run at about £280 million a year. That represents an increase of 221 per cent. in Government support for the voluntary sector since 1979.

A similar amount of support, although not quite as much, has gone to the citizens advice bureaux, to whose work in his constituency the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery paid tribute, as do we all to those in our constituencies. The hon. and learned Gentleman wove them into a rather appealing argument about the need to preserve the solicitors' conveyancing monopoly so as to ensure that there are at the same time enough solicitors to give free help to legal aid. That was one of the most ingenious arguments I have heard for a long time. If I am ever in trouble in the courts I shall go to the hon. and learned Gentleman—if he will take my brief.

The main responsibility for funding local citizens advice bureaux lies with local authorities. That has been so since 1948, when the law was changed to enable them to provide that support. Funding is primarily a matter for each local authority to decide, taking its priorities into account. The Government rightly fund the service, and our grant to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux now runs at almost £9 million—up 167 per cent. in real terms since 1979. So our support for the voluntary sector through grants to the CAB is formidable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) made a remarkable speech which I hope will be widely read by the professionals in the voluntary sector. He knows as much about volunteer work as anyone in that sector and spoke from the heart about important issues such as job sharing among volunteers and being cautious about developing counselling services too far—because of the dangers of becoming too bureaucratic.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) spoke next. Before she came to this place, she gave valuable public service as the chairman of two health authorities. I remember reshuffling her from North-West Norfolk health authority to Norwich health authority. There can be no greater form of active citizenship than chairing a health authority. She said that, like many other things—and I would choose neighbourhood watch—volunteerism is not only for the affluent classes. I found it rather offensive that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, who has now left the Opposition Front Bench, suggested that volunteerism was only for those who were affluent and middle class. The hon. Gentleman is more interested in speaking to other hon. Members than in listening to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West pressed me quite hard about the number of women that we were appointing to public bodies. I can tell her that 21 per cent. of Government appointments to voluntary bodies and statutory and public bodies are women. We give considerable grant aid, for example to the important "women into public life" campaign. We continue to fund that campaign, and many Departments appoint women to more than a quarter of their posts. The Departments which show major recent increases in the appointment of women include the Department of Social Security, the Home Office and the Cabinet Office. However, one of the problems we face is that we do not receive enough nominations of younger women in their 20s and 30s and the public appointments unit would be extremely pleased to hear from people who want to nominate younger women, as we receive very few such nominations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is president of some 58 voluntary groups in his constituency. That shows how many active citizens there are in Ealing, North and how lucky they are to have such an active Member of Parliament. I look forward to the 100th birthday celebrations that my hon. Friend mentioned. He talked about the relationship between churches and volunteering, a point also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) in her notable speech. He also gave me one of the most engaging pieces of information that I have ever heard in the House—that a number of volunteers freely give up their time to exercise polo ponies in Ham. I have long thought that polo was a sport for the very rich. The thought that active citizens freely give up their time to subsidise that sport by riding polo ponies is a new and interesting development of outdoor relief for the rich. Perhaps we will soon have new monastic orders such as "the little sisters of the rich" rattling tins and asking people

to give to those who have never known what it is to want. I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing that to the attention of the House.

Basildon of course figures large in the interests of its Member of Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) told us about the "I Love Basildon" campaign in which he plays a major part. When they open me up post mortem, they will find Basildon on my heart. As a Minister I have visited Basildon more often than any other place in the country. I have answered more Adjournment debates on Basildon than on any other issue.

My hon. Friend reminded me of a couple of the Adjournment debates to which I replied during my ministerial career in different Departments. I am glad to learn that some of the things for which he was pressing have come true. He referred to the Adjournment debate some years ago about the magistrates' court in Basildon. I am extremely glad that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor will be opening the new magistrates court in Basildon—proving that Adjournment debates can be worth while.

I remember an Adjournment debate many years ago in which hopes of building a hospice in Basildon were expressed. I was a junior health Minister, which in those days was a modest post. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon said that the individuals involved hoped to raise enough money to open a hospice. How marvellous it is that only four years later Mr. and Mrs. Cox and others have raised £660,000, and the hospice may soon be erected.

My hon. Friend asked me to mention to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the zero rating of hospital equipment. I shall have a gossip with him about that, as I will with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is responsible for radio issues, about community radio when I see him on Monday.

The hon. Member for Walton made a remarkable speech, which reminded me of the one he made, to which I listened with equal care, when, to my surprise, I found myself winding up a debate on Anglican Church issues. There were some echoes in his speech today of the one that he made on that occasion.

The hon. Member for Walton at least had an intellectually coherent view of future Socialist policy for the voluntary sector. Although I did not agree with all his speech, I found it intellectually appealing to hear him clearly set out his view of the right mixture of voluntary and state provision. The hon. Gentleman referred to it as "non-bureaucratic Socialism", and I see him nodding in assent.

The hon. Member recommended that hon. Members should read some books and dissented from what he fears will appear in the Labour party's policy review. Perhaps I can swap him a book, if he has not read it already, by a distinguished one-time hon. Member and Foreign Office Minister, Mr. Evan Luard, whom you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will probably remember. He wrote an excellent book entitled "Socialism without the State".

Mr. Heffer: I have read it.

Mr. Patten: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has read it. It may have influenced his thinking and led him some way towards a positive attitude on the voluntary sector.

Evan Luard was my Labour party opponent in 1979. Being a political canvasser or campaigner is a form of active citizenship. In 1983, he became my SDP opponent and, as an active citizen, slogged the streets for it. Alas, he was deselected in favour of a passing *Guardian* journalist. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and I experienced passing *Guardian* journalists being sent to our constituencies of Bath and Oxford, West and Abingdon. I beg *The Guardian* to send them again and again. Nothing is better for a Conservative candidate than a journalist from *The Guardian*. I dare say that I shall not be so lucky in the future; perhaps it will be someone from the *Sunday Sport*.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone made a powerful speech. She said that one does not have to be a member of a voluntary organisation to help people. That is what this debate on active citizenship is about. The examples that she gave of young people shopping and giving time to the elderly were telling.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) referred to payroll giving. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is currently having new forms printed for the upper limit of £480. They will shortly be available and I will ensure that hon. Members who attended the debate receive one.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): And the Minister.

Mr. Patten: I have already asked for one, I shall send one to the retiring hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) when he begins his new job in Florence, in which I wish him well, so that he can contribute substantially.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea rightly drew our attention to the fact that the level of giving in this country is lower than the United States.

Last, but by no means least, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) reported that he has a good relationship with the voluntary sector in his area—so much so that he holds his advice surgeries in its property. I expect that many hon. Members feel that we might as well move into the citizens advice bureaux offices anyway, or that they might as well move into ours, so close is the relationship between us and the people in the voluntary sector.

My hon. and learned Friend also made a number of important points about the need to involve special constables in the areas from which they were recruited. It is most important that they should be used for policing purposes in neighbourhood watch areas as we try to build up the role of the active citizen.

My hon. and learned Friend also referred to the importance of the active citizen in looking after the environment—a speciality of my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development who has done so much to stress the importance of environmental issues in the context of overseas aid. We shall be having a debate soon on that point. It will be a very interesting debate, so I do not intend to take up much more time. However, this debate has been so good that it is important to reply properly to all the points that have been made.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West is concerned about the relationship between the active citizen and crime. It is extremely difficult to be an active citizen if one is working in the teeth of local opposition. I am sad to say that there are areas where that is the case. The London boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth still refuse to build a proper partnership between the police and the public, through the police consultative

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committees. In his annual report to the Home Secretary, published yesterday, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis said:

> "I am disappointed that the hope I expressed in last year's report, that the majority political parties in the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hackney, Haringey and Lambeth would begin to participate in their local consultative groups has not been realised."

That is very sad. I invite the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, to whom I shall happily give way, to say that he will visit those councils and try to persuade them to take an active part in the police consultative committees, which involve active citizens in their areas as well as the police and the local authorities. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will want to stand up and respond to me.

Mr. Holland: In the case of Lambeth, which the Minister mentioned, it is relevant to point out that the entire reorganisation of the Metropolitan police was undertaken by the police after consulting Marks and Spencer and other commercial bodies. There were no consultations with either the Members of Parliament for the area or local councillors. That is the kind of treatment that many of these boroughs have had from the Met, and it is much to be regretted on both sides.

Mr. Patten: As that was probably the last opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to intervene during one of my speeches, I was happy to give way to him, since his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, leading for the home affairs team—and they need some leadership—on the Opposition Front Bench simply refused to say that he would encourage Labour boroughs to play their proper role in local police consultative groups.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: I must give way to my hon. Friend, because I referred to his constituency.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. When Government Whips give an assurance to Back Benchers, is there any way in which that assurance might be upheld?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I well appreciate and sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am afraid that this is a matter over which I have no control.

Mr. Greenway: Ealing has a very good police consultative committee on which I and the other Members of Parliament for the borough sit. It is widely representative of the community. We have to deal with the Ealing council's anti-police committee, on which the council spends a large sum of public money, and it is always denigrating the police.

Mr. Patten: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North has said it all.

It remains only for me to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon on his excellent speech and on the way in which he has created so much interest in the importance of the active citizens and voluntary organisations.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House confirms its commitment to the rôle of the active citizen and voluntary organisations in society.

International Debt

2·5 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the crucial role played by the World Bank, and, in particular, the International Development Association, in promoting development and alleviating the debt problems of the Third World; therefore urges Her Majesty's Government to support a generous real increase in the resources of the International Development Association in the forthcoming negotiations for its ninth replenishment; recommends that in future assistance provided by the International Development Association should be on grant terms, and that all outstanding International Development Association credits should be adjusted retrospectively into grants; and believes that measures of debt relief, such as the Brady plan, and new funds for the International Development Association would be a major contribution to restoring economic and social development in the Third World.

This will be an all-too-brief debate. I must say first that there are times when I think that I am not exactly the Minister's favourite Member of Parliament. On this occasion, so little do I feature in his thoughts that he does not appear to be listening to the point I am making. However, by way of compensation for keeping him late on a Friday, I assure him that if he finds it possible to accept my rather modest motion, I shall do my best to arrange the kind of reception for him in Glasgow that Daniel Ortega experienced last week.

We have had an interesting debate on the role of voluntary organisations and I feel confident that organisations such as Oxfam, the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, Christian Aid, the World Development Movement, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and War on Want would feel that the week before an extremely important meeting in London dealing with world debt is an important time for us to have this debate and to give the Minister an opportunity—alas, an all-too-brief one—to respond to what we have to say.

This debate takes place against a background of a cut in aid to Africa of 26 per cent., or £600 million, which does not balance the excellent efforts of organisations such as Band Aid and Sport Aid, which feel that, on top of their efforts, there is a great need for us to address ourselves to the problem of debt. The debate gives us an opportunity to talk about the influence of the World Bank, the International Development Association, and, of course, the Brady plan. We do so in the knowledge that the ninth replenishment meeting of the International Development Association will take place in London next week.

The Minister knows that IDA provides generous loans on generous terms to the poorest countries and that every three years, the replenishment comes up for debate. We hope that the Government will approach the meeting positively. We want to see a generous replenishment next week as we realise that the present figure of $12 billion is somewhat inadequate. We should—and I hope that the Minister will have the opportunity to tell us this—attempt to exceed that figure next week, especially as the United Kingdom share has declined noticeably.

All this takes place at a time when we know that the British people are generous in their approach to these matters, but also at a time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a surplus of £15 billion in the last Budget. It is not as though the resources are not available if the will is there. We must not have a world in which the poorest countries are subsidising the rest of us and in which we do not appear to be taking steps to remove the dreadful problem of debt.

I want to quote the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) from the important speech he made on 29 March to the Overseas Development Institute and the Royal Institute for International Affairs. He said:

"Either way both lenders and borrowers in the 1970s made some awful financial decisions. But the real tragedy is that the resulting debt crisis, far from encouraging forgiveness, has relentlessly ensured that the sins of the fathers have been visited on children in the third world."

I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend pursues these matters with vigour.

Our contribution and approach should be those of the last Labour Government. They did not have the resources in oil that this Government have experienced, yet under Judith Hart, we had a far better record. The Minister will recall that under IDA 4, the Labour Government's contribution was 11·1 per cent. Under IDA 5, it was 10·6 per cent. and under IDA 6, it was 10·1 per cent. Under the Tories, our share under IDA 7 was 6·7 per cent. and the same under IDA 8, so I look forward to a huge increase to make up for those lost opportunities when the Government tell us about their approach to next week's meeting, which is important because the replenishment of the agreement will apply until 1993.

The views contained in the motion are widely shared. On the future, the motion makes it clear that grants should be offered in some cases, if only because we have seen in the past that loans do not always make economic sense. I am delighted to say that, on that point, I speak not only for my hon. Friends but for a clear majority in the House. That was made clear in a letter addressed to Mr. Barber Conable, the president of the World Bank in spring 1988, signed by 400 hon. Members including 169 Conservative Members. It said:

"When IDA started lending to the Third World's poorest countries in the early 1960s, its terms were amongst the most concessional of any aid donor. However, since then the governments of many donors such as the United States, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany, have switched to providing nearly all of their bilateral aid to the poorest countries on grant terms."

The letter continued:

"In the discussions beginning this year on the ninth replenishment of IDA, we urge that you put proposals to donor governments that the funds they supply for IDA should then be provided to the poorest countries on grant terms."

That letter was signed by Lord Oram, the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), and the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) and was supported by more than 400 hon. Members altogether.

Having endorsed that aim, as I hope we shall, should we not do something else? Should we not consider that $32 billion of credit are outstanding which the poorest countries owe to the World Bank? Should we not accept that that is a major problem inviting a response? The countries concerned are flat on their backs. Over the years, some of them have grown out of their difficulties. We accept that South Korea, for example, would not qualify for any arrangements; indeed, it might be invited, in its new role and with its new status as a developing country, to contribute to countries whose need is so great.

There is a case for multilateral aid being grant-supported rather than being based on loans. There is also a case

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—many have supported this view—for writing off much of the debt retrospectively. There is nothing new about that proposal. I shall try to be fair to the Minister, even though he does not always make life easy for me, by saying that even this Government have accepted in their bilateral aid policy that there is a case for grants instead of loans. They have carried on Judith Hart's policy, and I am delighted to see her successor, the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) here. I give the Government credit for doing that, but why do they not apply that important concept to multilateral debt and introduce it into the meeting next week. The World Bank has a major influence on these matters. It is the largest source of multilateral aid to Africa at the moment, accounting for 25 per cent. of the total.

An article in *The Times* of 5 April, referring to the recent meeting of the Group of Seven said:

"The meetings of the Group of Seven, International Monetary Fund and World Bank which ended yesterday were characterized, as usual, by surface harmony. All the participants claimed to support the letter of the communiqués while going on to interpret them in ways which were blatantly at odds with each other."

There is a need for some form of leadership, but not of the sort that we have seen so far in the Government's representations.

In a previous debate I asked the Minister to comment on the Brady proposals. We have had little debate so far on these matters in the House and, especially, on the Brady proposals. I refer the Minister to a comment in the *Financial Times* on 19 April:

"By emphasising voluntary debt reduction, accelerated with financial support from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the US has implicitly recognised that—at least for countries taking the right kind of economic measures—ability to pay should be a factor in deciding what countries should pay."

It added:

"One could not expect banks to support the moral argument. However, there are strong financial arguments to suggest that they should try to embrace the Brady proposals as convincingly as possible."

For reasons out of my control, time is not on our side, but we sincerely ask the Minister and the Government at least to consider the contents of the motion. We recognise the awful problem that debt represents to the developing countries—to the poorest of the poor. We see no good in the Chancellor seemingly giving with the one hand and then very definitely taking away with the other. Debt represents an enormous problem. It leads to hunger and to poverty, which strike a major blow to the quality of life of millions of men and women in the Third world.

I believe that Great Britain has a contribution to make towards the economic and social development of the developing world. Next week we have a responsibility to make such a contribution to solving those problems. I urge the Minister to consider these matters seriously, because poverty in the Third world represents perhaps the biggest threat to peace apart from nuclear weapons. The problem invites a major response from the Government and from the Minister.

2.16 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Christopher Patten): I am glad to have the chance again to discuss in the House the important issues of aid and development. I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his good fortune and his choice of subject.

The motion refers to the "international debt crisis". That well-worn phrase can tempt us to see the problems of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in the 1980s only in terms of international debt. That would be wrong. Those two regions in fact owe not much more than half of total developing country debt. There are some very heavy debtors in Asia. Yet Asia in the 1980s, unlike Africa or Latin America, demonstrates a consistent run of strongly positive growth in per capita income figures. We should, perhaps, rather talk of Africa and Latin America suffering a "development crisis", and not focus purely on debt in seeking the causes or the remedies of those countries' economic difficulties.

The motion, perhaps rather unhelpfully, refers us not to the causes of debt problems, but to their remedies. I propose to deal briefly with the situation in Africa, before turning to comment on the recent proposals for middle-income debtors, which are specifically mentioned in the motion. I have often said before that the key to Africa's economic recovery lies in the policies pursued by African Governments. More and more are now pursuing economic reform programmes agreed with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. There are also encouraging signs that economic performance in recent years has been better in those countries which have adopted adjustment programmes than in those which have not.

However, we have long recognised that many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with incomes typically around $350 a head, will never be able to repay all the debts that they owe. We have played a part in recent initiatives to alleviate the debt burden of sub-Saharan Africa. In April 1987 we launched an initiative to help those poorest, most indebted countries, which were prepared to shoulder the difficult responsibility of restructuring their economies. The initiative called for the writing-off of old aid loans and the rescheduling of other official debt on concessional terms.

Britain has taken a lead in implementing the first part by cancelling nearly £1 billion of old aid loans or providing equivalent relief. The Chancellor's second proposal formed the basis of the agreement reached at the Toronto ecomomic summit in June 1988. Nine countries have now had their official debt rescheduled on concessional terms in the Paris Club and more are likely to follow in the next few months.

In the multilateral institutions, the Government have played their part in providing financial support for the poorest debtor countries pursuing economic reforms. We have agreed to provide up to £327 million over 14 years to subsidise loans from the International Monetary Fund's new enhanced structural adjustment facility. That is enough to subsidise one sixth of total lending and makes us the largest single contributor to the subsidy account. Seven of the poorest most heavily indebted countries already have programmes supported by that facility.

At the World Bank we have pledged £250 million over three years in association with the bank's special programme of assistance for Africa. I shall speak later of our specific contributions to the International Development Association, a subject referred to in terms in the motion and to which the hon. Member for Monklands, West referred at some length.

The position of Latin American countries is very different from that which I have just described. Their incomes per head are typically five or six times as high as those in Africa. The bulk of their debt is owed to commercial banks. Given that they are starting from a higher base than African countries, it is even more true that prospects for growth depend on their economic policies. Economic reform can do more than debt reduction to improve the prospects for growth and for rising living standards. It can also do more than debt reduction schemes to help countries to overcome their debt difficulties. Sensible policies form the basis for a long-term recovery of creditworthiness. They are also important in meeting short-term financing needs. Confidence in a country's economic management will encourage investors to put their money into a country and will discourage residents from putting their savings elsewhere and adding to the problems of capital flight.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Surely the Minister recognises that one feature of the Brady plan is that it recognises that debt cannot be repaid. Is the Minister not aware that Brazil has halved its imports since 1981 and that that has had a major effect on United Kingdom exports? Studies, such as that carried out by Gabriel Palme of Cambridge university, have shown that up to a quarter of a million jobs in the United Kingdom have been lost because of forgone exports to indebted countries. Therefore, it is not simply a question of internal management, on which the Minister has made some substantive point, but a matter of looking at global trading as a whole.

Mr. Patten: May I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), say that if this is the last opportunity that the hon. Gentleman will have for intervening in one of my speeches, that makes this an even less happy day than would otherwise be the case, given that it is another birthday for me. I have always enjoyed the intellectual jousts that I have had with the hon. Gentleman in the House and I hope that the fact that he is moving to the humbler surroundings of Florence will not mean that we shall not have the opportunity of such exchanges in the future.

However, I do not entirely accept the hon. Gentleman's description of the Brady plan, to which I look forward to returning. I am not convinced that the hon. Gentleman is right in what he says about our exports to Brazil. I think he will find that there has been hardly any change in the last few years.

Mr. Holland: What about Latin America?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to Brazil. With me on the Government Front Bench is the Minister for Trade, who knows much more about these matters than I do, but I do not think the position is precisely as described by the hon. Gentleman.

Just as in Africa, debtors in Latin America require external finance to support their economic reforms. That is why we have supported the recent decisions of the IMF interim committee to encourage further voluntary debt reduction by the commercial banks. But that raises questions about the respective responsibilities of the public and private sectors. I do believe that the right sort of debt reduction can have an increasing role to play in meeting those financing needs.

Many have called for what I consider the wrong sort of debt reduction—debt reduction brought about by taxpayers bailing out the banks. All along we have taken the view that management of their existing debts is a problem that banks must sort out with debtors. If the banks have lent unwisely, they must face the consequences.

In their negotiations with debtors, banks have developed a range of innovative financing arrangements. Some of those involve an element of debt reduction. Chile, for example, has reduced its debt by about a quarter, largely by means of a vigorous debt-equity programme. But overall, the impact of debt reduction has so far been small in comparison with the total stock of debt.

In the years since 1982, Governments have done a great deal to help middle income debtors. We have provided financial assistance through rescheduling Paris Club debts and providing new lending through the IMF and the World Bank. We have also maintained a strong commitment to an open multilateral trading system and general stability and growth in the world economy.

The consequence so far has been that Governments have done more than their share. Commercial banks have rescheduled principal payments. The Paris Club has been prepared to reschedule interest, too. Together with substantial new lending by the IMF and World Bank, this contribution from the official sector has provided far more resources for debtor countries than the new money and debt reduction provided by the banks. Overall, while exposure of commercial banks to the 15 most heavily indebted countries has risen by 17 per cent., that of the public sector has risen by 107 per cent.—over six times as fast.

That injection of funds by Governments and the international institutions has given the banks some breathing space to restore their balance sheets. The danger of systemic collapse of the banking system has been averted. Banks are now in a position to increase the rate of debt reduction. But we believe that this remains a matter for commercial banks to negotiate with the countries concerned. To abandon now our policy that Governments should not finance reductions in bank debt will only increase the already disproportionate burden being borne by taxpayers.

The agreements reached at the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in discussion of Secretary Brady's proposals to which the hon. Member for Monklands, West referred in interesting terms, are designed to support this sort of voluntary negotiated debt reduction—what I referred to earlier as the right sort of debt reduction. Secretary Brady's initiative consisted of ideas for further work. It was not a blue print. The interim committee agreed, with United Kingdom support, that those ideas should be pursued further. It also reiterated the cardinal principals of the existing strategy—the need for fundamental and convincing economic reforms in debtor countries, the need for a case-by-case approach, and the principle that official creditors should not subsidise private lenders. It was agreed that the IMF and World Bank should set aside a part of their policy-based lending to facilitate debt reduction operations for countries undertaking sound economic reforms.

It was agreed that the two institutions should work out specific proposals to put to their respective boards, and we are now playing a full part in the further detailed work that is going on. No details have yet been decided. We are also participating fully in the international review of tax

[Mr. Patten]

regulatory and accounting obstacles to debt reduction which Secretary Brady has proposed. In those further discussions, Britain will seek to ensure that, as agreed, official lending supported by the taxpayer will not substitute for private lending. We shall, therefore, be looking particularly carefully at proposals for additional interest support mechanisms. We want support for debt reduction to go where it can be effective—to countries undertaking strong economic reform programmes. We shall want to see——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Private Members' Bills

LICENSING AMENDMENT (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for consideration read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Consideration deferred till Friday 26 May.

2.30 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I bring to the attention of the House the fact that the Bill has the full support of the Government and has been supported throughout the procedure. It is now clear that an English Tory Member has sabotaged a Scottish Bill and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Nothing has occurred that is out of order.

Mr. Hood: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have just made the point that an English Tory Member has stabbed the Scottish people in the back.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order read for consideration in Committee.

Hon. Members: Object.

Committee Friday 9 June.

CONTROL OF LITTER (FINES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 May.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not hear any of my hon. Friends object to the Bill. It has all-party support——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have a lot of business to get through. Nothing has taken place that is out of order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that. Perhaps we can get on.

Mr. Burns: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that that was not a point of order. Perhaps he will let us get on with the business.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONORARY CITIZENSHIP) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 May.

TROPICAL HARDWOODS (CONTROL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 May.

ABOLITION OF DOMESTIC RATES ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 May.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE, ARBITRATION, PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

GAMING MACHINES (PROBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 May.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

FOOTBALL SPECTATORS (No.2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 May.

HOUSING ACT 1985 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

ROAD TRAFFIC (BREATH TESTS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [24 February].

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

REQUIREMENTS OF WRITING (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 9 June.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 19 May.

Mr. Burns: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry if I caused any confusion with my earlier point of order. I was merely going to ask whether it would be possible for you to read the title of my Control of Litter (Fines) Bill again: I do not believe that the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) could possibly have objected to it, as so many people—including Labour Members and Labour local authorities—support——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that I had made it clear to the hon. Gentleman when he sought to pursue a similar point earlier that it was not a point of order. Nothing that has happened has been out of order.

Post Office

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

2.35 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for responding to this debate. Our two earlier debates were answered by two Ministers with the same name: at least this one provides some variety from the plethora of Pattens.

I am not sure how much experience my hon. Friend has of his post going astray, but he lives, I believe, in one of the longest-inhabited castles in the land, so perhaps the Post Office has had time to get it right in his case. Sadly, that is not most people's experience. I believe that Woodrow Wilson once said that people would endure their tyrants for years but would tear their deliverers to pieces. I do not know whether he had postal deliveries in mind, but I know that some of my constituents have.

The Post Office is a topical subject this week. All sorts of things have been delivered that should not have been, with the Leader of the Opposition—if he is to be believed—receiving mail that the Post Office denies having delivered at all. Too often, however, the postal service can only be described as hopeless, and typical of a service that has no competition.

Competition is not, I suggest, a political panacea, but it has a good track record in achieving higher quality at lower cost. Let me quote from that gospel that I am sure my hon. Friend takes nightly to bed with him, the Conservative manifesto:

"The Conservative Government has created a framework in which once again enterprise can flourish—by cutting red tape, by denationalising state-owned companies, by removing unnecessary restrictions . . . by keeping down prices through extending competition, and by ensuring access to open trade".

I can almost hear my hon. Friend singing that refrain into his shaving mirror every day. The manifesto goes on:

"Competition forces the economy to respond to the needs of the consumer. It promotes efficiency, holds down costs, drives companies to innovate and ensures that customers get the best possible value for money."

All that is true, unless we are talking about the postal service.

The manifesto also says:

"We have fostered a new spirit of enterprise"——

except, as it should have confessed, in the Post Office. It says:

"The British instinct is for choice and independence"——

unless, apparently, we want to post a letter.

Why, I ask my hon. Friend, have we been so timid about bringing the consumer the benefits of competition in the postal service? Who is frightened of competition? Surely it is not my hon. Friend, and surely it is not the Government. Can it really be the chairman and board of the Post Office? Only a few years ago I remember talking to senior Post Office executives who were excited at the prospect of privatisation and gearing up to win in a competitive world. I wonder what has happened to those people. Are they now terrified by the idea of giving the British public a bit of choice? Have the men of enterprise become the mice of protectionism—or, as my hon. Friend might say, have the lions become donkeys? I fear that they have. My constituents think that they have, and they do not like it.

I have already raised the non-deliveries over Christmas, the anti-consumer decision to close sub-post offices because bureaucratic tidiness is valued more highly than customer satisfaction, and the cost to business of lost letters. One mail order firm tells me that it loses £1.2 million worth of packages every year, and the Periodical Publishers Association, which spends £90 million a year on post, says that less than 50 per cent. of items posted first-class arrive the next day. I refer my hon. Friend to the response given last November in the House by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs who, when asked about disruptive postal services in London, confirmed that:

"during the period November 1987 to October 1988, there have been a total of 55 industrial disputes within the letters business, four within the parcels business and eight within the counters business which affected postal services in the numbered London postal districts".—*[Official Report,* 8 November 1988, Vol. 140, c. 139.]

I am tired of raising the issue of lost letters, late deliveries and diminishing service to the public. Surely, it does not have to be that way. Surely, there must be a better way. If the Post Office does not believe me, it should ask the Post Office. It is that very same Post Office which today resists public choice that, in 1981, faced up to the newly competitive world of express mail and produced a winner in Datapost. As a result, we have choice of courier, reliability of service and reasonable cost. Jobs have been created in the private sector and, by and large, consumers are satisfied. That should have been no great surprise, because parcels have always benefited from competition. The Post Office has never had a parcels monopoly. As a result, it has had to provide a service that competes in cost and quality with the best of the private sector alternatives.

Will my hon. Friend announce today the timetable for launching the parcels service into the private sector? I presume that the appointment as its managing director of the former managing director of DHL, Mr. Nelson, was made with this in mind, but the timetable has been a long time coming. Likewise, the counter services should also be on their way to the private sector. We await the date for their lift off into free enterprise.

I should have thought that the success of the Government's 1981 policy on express mail and the lessons of competition in parcels, would be part of the catechism for DTI Ministers and officials. I am sorry to say that I am not sure that that is the case. The latest DTI report, produced by the wonderfully entitled Institute of Logistics and Distribution Management, does not seem to be aware of the success that has been achieved in this area. For example, it calls for the creation of a working party to monitor the industry and identify its needs when such a working party not only exists, but is chaired by the DTI. It proposes taxpayers' support for research initiatives, when the industry is quite happy to continue to finance its many research projects out of its own money.

My task today is to tempt my hon. Friend down the path of competitive righteousness and away from protectionist leftishness. As he knows, in 1981 the postal monopoly was suspended for letters and packages for which there was a charge of £1 or more. That is clearly too expensive to attract customers, and so it is uneconomic for firms to set up to provide an alternative service. That £1 requirement could be abolished without any threat to the Post Office. A 5p levy could be charged, as suggested in the report of the London School of Economics, so that the Post Office was compensated for its rural and so-called uneconomic services, and a viable choice would emerge for the public in many parts of the country.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I am glad that my hon. Friend raised the spectre of uneconomic rural areas. Is he aware that research shows that it is cheaper to deliver mail in rural areas because there more labour is available and there is no problem of Postman Pat's van travelling through crowded streets. Therefore, that is a complete non-argument.

Mr Bowis: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that valid point. At the moment, I am merely seeking to bend over backwards to show that there is no threat implied to the Post Office in terms of the cost to it of continuing these services. I hope that my hon. Friend's point will be logged at Post Office headquarters and the DTI.

I hope that the Minister will soon respond to the LSE report. For now, I shall put aside the more comprehensive proposal and ask for at least a step in the right direction. Let me ask for half a loaf now, and let us settle for a 50p requirement.

As I understand it—my hon. Friend the Minister may be able to confirm this—that has been agreed in principle. Therefore, what are we waiting for? Not even the chairman of the Post Office could conceivably object to that modest step towards customer satisfaction. It will hardly threaten the mighty Post Office. After all, good as it is, the private sector handles just 25 million items a year, while the Post Office handles 50 million a day. Projections are for mail to increase from 1·8 billion items a year to 2·5 billion, so there is plenty of scope for everyone.

If we move towards a world of postal alternatives we begin to free the public from being held to ransom by industrial disputes. In theory, the Secretary of State now has the power to lift the partial monopoly in the event of a postal strike, but he has not chosen to do so on any occasion to date—and what if he did? Who would come galloping to the rescue with an alternative service? I suspect that nothing would happen and that there would be a deafening silence, because no one has been allowed to set up even an embryonic competitive business. If we had a limited choice there would be some point in lifting the monopoly completely in the event of a strike; and perhaps it would make a strike less likely in the first place.

Internationally, we do not suffer from the same sort of monopoly as we do domestically, but threats are being realised and opportunities to liberalise the international post missed. We have two more years of the presidency of the Euro Centre for Post and Telecoms—the CEPT—and I hope that we will use them to promote a new liberal framework. I understand that there will be an opportunity to do that this autumn at the Universal Postal Union congress.

For example, the situation surrounding Remail needs clarifying. Remail seeks the best mix of post and courier services, here and abroad, for the consumer, and the simplest way to achieve that would be to remove article 23 of the UPU convention, which is a bar to Remail and must surely be contrary to the treaty of Rome, at least in spirit and possibly in law.

Substantial business is at risk. I know of one firm which earns £150 million a year from this service. While we are at it, perhaps we can give the private sector parity of treatment with the Post Office at airports and customs. Why do we require courier parcels to have triplicate forms travelling separately from the parcel, while Post Office parcels get by with a single sticker? And why is trans-shipment not possible for the private sector without having to go through Customs twice?

Overall, there is a danger of the DTI protecting the Post Office from the Department's own competition policy. Not content with smothering competition at home, it seems that the Post Office is setting out to stitch up the European market with its counterparts in other EC countries. Its purpose is to keep out unwanted competition from the private sector. Our couriers have lodged a formal complaint with the Commission, and it seems likely that the Post Office will be singled out as the leader of an anti-competitive ring. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will not defend that, and I trust that his Department has submitted evidence in support of the couriers' case.

We also await, I believe, a European green paper on postal services. Its purpose is to consider whether a postal monopoly should be permitted. Again, I hope that the Government are resisting this idea with their customary vigour. We should instead be putting forward a regime of developing competition, based on 1981 steps that were found so successful, and the steps that I hope my hon. Friend will be able to announce for the British market.

With 1992 on the way, the Post Office and its British competitors ought to be competing for business throughout Europe. I am sure that private sector firms would be eager to do so, but, sad to say, the Post Office seems to want to stay at home and put up the shutters.

Britain can be proud of its postal achievements in the past and it can be proud of the success of the express service industry, public and private, that has resulted from the Government's deregulation in 1981. We need the same success for the post. Perhaps the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should have a look at the postal monopoly —it seems to be looking at everything else—but, meanwhile, I ask my hon. Friend to make market sense of the exemption level and reduce it to 50p.

Finally, as a postcript, will my hon. Friend explain why we perpetuate a unique restrictive practice within our own Palace of Westminster? If a courier delivers here, every envelope must have a stamp in addition to the cost of the hand delivery. That is one Post Office monopoly at which even the Post Office must blush with embarassment. I suggest that we consign it to the history books.

2.48 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I am glad to have this opportunity of standing in for my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs to reply to the cogent and effective speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). The House well knows that he has a long record of attention to the failings of the Post Office and of vigorous action on behalf of his constituents and other consumers to try to correct them. As recently as February of this year he set out his views in a speech introducing a ten-minute Bill. No person could honestly deny sharing many of the feelings that he has articulated, either in principle or from personal experience.

Equally, we must recognise that the Post Office is more than just another nationalised industry. The length of time for which it has been in existence, its pioneering role in world postal services and its historical links with the Crown make it a national institution. Its services are

[Mr. Alan Clark]

available to all members of the population and all have an interest in securing its efficient and effective operation. We often take for granted aspects of it which are far from the norm in other countries. We have the privilege of letters and parcels being delivered to our doors, wherever in the United Kingdom we live. That involves calling on more than 23 million private and business addresses.

Moreover, since Rowland Hill established the penny post in 1840, we have had a universal tariff so that it costs no more to send a letter from Lands End to John O'Groats than it does to send one from my hon. Friend at Westminster to his constituency in Battersea. However, my hon. Friend raised an interesting point about the cost of rural deliveries, which I had not heard, but we shall certainly take it into account. It defies ready acceptance that it should cost less to send a letter from London to Caithness than from London to Battesea, but I should certainly welcome further information on that.

It is not widely realised that there is no statutory obligation on the Post Office to charge a single tariff for all letters of the same class and weight, irrespective of the distance carried; but it has always done so as a matter of custom and practice for the past 150 years, although it is argued that such equality of treatment is uneconomic.

Mr. Bowis: I wonder whether the same principle is applied to the parcels service where there is competition and therefore a better public service.

Mr. Clark: Parcels are delivered all over the United Kingdom at the same cost. The price varies only in relation to their weight and in some cases to their size, but the tariff is universal whatever the distance.

Since it ceased to be a Government Department and became a public corporation some 20 years ago, the Post Office has transformed itself into a profitable organisation, run on commercial lines. It has had a sustained run of profitability for at least 10 years. In each of the last two financial years it made profits of well over £100 million. It has managed to sustain that high level of performance while maintaining letter tariffs which compare very favourably with those of other European countries, some of which do not even aim to provide such a high basic level of service. That improved performance, and the economic recovery of recent years have combined to create a rapid increase in demand for postal services during the past 10 years.

Mrs. Gorman: My hon. Friend has just put forward an argument for the retention of any monopoly. Any monopoly can produce what it calls a competitive price, but how do we know whether that price is competitive when there is no competition?

Mr. Clark: I do not know whether I mentioned a competitive price. However, it is perfectly true that it should not be hard for monopolies to produce profits. At present, the Post Office handles some 46 million individually addressed letters every day. In the course of 1987-88 it handled 40 per cent. more letters than it had done a decade ago, and 25 per cent. more parcels, with growth—particularly in letter services—expected to continue. That growth has undoubtedly presented a challenge to Post Office management and employees in terms of meeting the need simultaneously to maintain and improve quality of service and targets.

Against that background, there has been an unfortunate rise in the level of disruption by the work force. There has been a high level of localised disruption, often an unofficial response to changes in working practices. In the financial year 1988-89 there were 278 disputes in Royal Mail Letters, resulting in the loss of more than 1 million working days. Industrial action on that scale has had an impact on the Post Office's financial position, the volume of business it handles and the quality of service to the consumer. The strike had an effect on letter delivery performance that far outweighed the duration of the strike—or at any rate it uses that as an excuse. In the previous financial year, 1987-88, letter delivery performance improved to its highest ever level —an average of 88·7 per cent. of first-class letters met the Post Office's target of being ready for delivery by day B, the day after date-stamping, with approximately 95 per cent. of second-class letters ready for delivery by day D, the third day after date-stamping.

Those figures fell short of the Post Office's letter performance targets of 90 per cent. ready for delivery by day B for first-class letters and 96 per cent. ready by day D for second-class letters. The strike affected first-class letter performance in particular for some months. This year's performance has sunk below the level that I mentioned earlier.

Perhaps more important, the small print of those criteria refers to "ready for delivery", which is not the same as "delivered". It is a let-out for the Post Office, which possibly explains the fact that it manages to discharge its functions up to the target that it has given itself of up to 90 per cent. It may explain why, in our experience, first-class letters are unreliable almost to the point that one can no longer use them for any serious transaction and assume that one's correspondent will receive the news or document within 24 hours.

The undertaking that second-class letters will be ready for delivery by day D is a pretty feeble target. Irritatingly, it is widely rumoured that second-class post is often not delivered, even when it is ready to be delivered and no first-class post is standing in front of it, simply because, I am searching for a euphemism but am forced to fall back on the adjective "bureaucracy", says that it is within the target that they should be delivered on day D and therefore they must wait until day D.

The letters business employs 160,000 staff. The Post Office has been experiencing difficulties over the past 18 months recruiting and retaining staff in areas in which demand for labour is high, which has had an effect on the efficiency of its service.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend has listed the Post Office's delivery problems. Some hon. Members have been raising such problems for years. I refer my hon. Friend to when the matter was raised with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who said:

> "The Post Office has a monopoly and if this kind of thing continues we shall have to consider . . . reducing the monopoly threshold from the present level of £1."—[*Official Report*, 1 December 1988; Vol. 142, c. 871.]

That was December and we are now in May. Is it not time to act?

Mr. Clark: The speed with which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister moves is sometimes subject to criticism. If my hon. Friend wishes to press her to act more speedily, I suggest that he takes advantage of the bi-weekly occasions when she answers questions.

My hon. Friend's most recent intervention illustrates the fact that there are those who argue that the only way in which the Post Office can be efficient and genuinely responsive to consumers' needs is to subject it to a greater degree of competition by abolishing its statutory monopoly over the conveyance of letters and/or subjecting it to market disciplines through privatisation.

Some increase in competition could be achieved by reducing the current £1 monopoly threshold. Plainly, to take it as far as the standard minimum tariff or below would effectively eliminate the monopoly. But we do keep under consideration the topic of a further reduction in the threshold and, were specific proposals to be made, this is a subject on which we should be obliged to consult the Post Office—that is to say, the board and the chairman. We have also reaffirmed on several occasions our readiness to suspend the monopoly in the event of industrial disruption which resulted in a serious decline in the quality of the letter service.

My hon. Friend has referred on previous occasions to the privatisation of the Post Office. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said during the last general election campaign that privatisation of the Royal Mail was not contemplated because of its special character. What I have said about the role of the letter service in the community bears that out, I hope. However, there are other aspects and functions of the Post Office that are generally understood to be outwith the definition of the Royal Mail.

I hope that my hon. Friends will be able to draw some encouragement from what I have said. I leave it to them to interpret it, using their own decoding devices. The Post Office's performance and the measures that it is taking to improve its quality of service are being watched closely and will be valuable as testimony in helping us to decide what further developments are in the best interests of the community and the consumer. I reassure the House that we are constantly considering practical ways in which to encourage the Post Office to become even more efficient and to provide an even more effective service.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 May 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Debt

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what date he expects Government debt to be wholly repaid.

Mr. Lilley: Repayment of the whole of the outstanding stock of debt is not an objective of Government policy.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the approximate current overseas holding in the national debt.

Mr. Lilley: At the end of 1987-88, the total market holdings of sterling national debt were £173·2 billion, of which £22·1 billion were held by the overseas sector.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which financial sectors received the largest repayment of debt arising from the recent Budget decisions.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 4 April 1989, at column 5. Detailed figures for 1988-89 will not be available for several months. It is impossible to identify in advance the precise composition of the debt repayment arising from the forecast PSDR of £14 billion in 1989-90.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the national debt at May 1979 and at April 1988.

Mr Lilley: National Debt is measured annually at the end of the financial year. The total outstanding at the end of 1978-79 was £86·9 billion (47 per cent. of GDP) and at the end of 1987-88 was £197·3 billion (44 per cent. of GDP).

National debt however, is not the best measure of public sector indebtedness, for instance because it covers only central Government debt, not the whole of the public sector. A better measure is net public sector debt, which was £95·3 billion (50 per cent. of GDP) at the end of 1978-79, and £171·3 billion (38 per cent. of GDP) at the end of 1987-88.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the principal beneficiaries to date of his 1989 Budget decision to repay £14 billion Government debt.

Mr. Lilley: The nation as a whole will benefit from this decision as a result of the permanent reduction in debt interest payments, which will free public money for priority spending programmes while still reducing general Government expenditure as a share of GDP.

Petrol Prices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what price assumptions for the price of *(a)* unleaded, *(b)* 2-star and *(c)* 4-star petrol he based his Budget proposals for the reduction in duty on unleaded petrol; to what extent these have proved accurate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend made it clear in his Budget speech that he expected the full decrease in the duty on unleaded petrol to be passed on to the consumer. He also expected his proposals on 2-star petrol to raise the price at the pumps to the level of 4-star.

Siemens Printers

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Siemens ND3 printers are used by his Department, either in-house or through a private contract; and what is the location of each.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury does not use Siemens ND3 printers. We do not know what printers are used by our printing contractors.

Single Market

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on levels of value added tax in the context of progress towards the single market by 1992.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have made it clear on numerous occasions that they do not consider centrally imposed tax approximation to be necessary for the completion of the single market.

Capital Inflows

Mr. John Townend: To ask The Chancellor of the Exchequer if he can give an estimate of the inflow of capital into the United Kingdom due to high income taxpayers making the United Kingdom their base because of the tax regime introduced by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Reductions in tax rates and the success of the Government's general economic policies have created a climate which encourages skilled people to work and pay tax in the United Kingdom. Tax reform has also played a part in encouraging foreign companies to locate in this country. However I regret that the information requested on capital inflows is not available.

Balance of Payments

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his criteria for deciding when it would be appropriate to revise his estimate of the balance of payments deficit for the current year.

Mr. Major As usual, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will publish his next forecast with the 1989 Autumn Statement.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total value of North sea oil revenue from 1979 to the current date.

Mr. Lilley: The estimate of the value of North sea oil and gas revenues in fiscal years 1979-80 to 1988-89 is £69 billion.

Manufactured Goods (Trade)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the balance of trade in manufacturing for the current year.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on 19 April, at column 168.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Government expect to announce their proposals to levy value added tax on industrial water supply and sewerage services in line with the recent European Court of Justice ruling; what are the expected administration costs of levying value added tax; who will bear the costs; and what is the expected annual return to the Exchequer of the value added tax levy.

Mr. Lilley: Clause 18 of the Finance Bill currently before the House details the Government's proposals. the expected additional administration costs for Customs and Excise will be minimal. Water undertakings will incur some administrative costs, mainly in setting up the arrangements. The net impact on Exchequer receipts will be negligible.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show for 1989-90 those ranges of earnings within which the burden of income tax plus national insurance is less than in 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The burden of income tax plus national insurance will be less in 1989-90 than it was in 1978-79 at all levels of real earnings.

Housing Costs

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has with regard to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries on the percentage contribution housing costs in various forms make to the calculations of a retail prices index; and what is the comparable percentage for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* Information on the contribution of housing costs to the consumer price indices for OECD countries is available from national statistical sources and from OECD *Main Economic Indicators* December 1988. The treatment varies greatly from country to country: for example, some countries include prices of fuel, water and home furnishings as part of housing costs, but others do not. There is also a variety of treatment of home ownership costs: some countries exclude these altogether, others include a measure of imputed rent, while others, like the United Kingdom, include mortgage interest payments. Available figures relate to the base year for the price indices and these differ across countries.

On this basis the information requested is as follows:

Housing Costs
Percentage weight in consumer price indices

	Percentage
United States of America	42
Japan	21
Germany	15
France	9
United Kingdom	18
Italy	4
Canada	38
Austria	11
Belgium	8
Denmark	19
Finland	18
Greece	13
Iceland	13
Ireland	6
Luxembourg	0
Netherlands	16
Norway	22
Portugal	0
Spain	18
Sweden	26
Switzerland	17
Turkey	n/a
Australia	14
New Zealand	21

The following indicates precisely which costs are included in the total weight given to the housing component in the consumer price indices in each of the OECD countries. These costs are divided into three categories: *(a)* costs in the rented sector, *(b)* the costs of home ownership, and *(c)* other costs, including in some cases fuel, water, power and home furnishings. A — indicates a zero weight for this item. The figures in brackets are the weights shown in the table.

United States (42):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent, taxes, repairs and insurance
(c) Fuel, power and home furnishings
Source:—Bureau of Labour Statistics

Japan (21):
(a) Rent and repairs
(b) Imputed rent
(c) —
Source:—Statistics Bureau Management and Co-ordination Agency, *Monthly Statistics of Japan*

West Germany (15):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent
(c) —
Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, Statistisches Jahrbuch 1988.

France (9):
(a) Rent and repairs
(b) —
(c) —
Source: INSEE, *Bulletin Mensuel de Statistique March 1989*

United Kingdom (18):
(a) Rent
(b) Interest payments, repairs, insurance and rates
(c) Water
Source: Department of Employment, *Employment Gazette* April 1989
Note: The weight of 18 per cent. given in the answer is the latest figure, and compares with 15·25 per cent. shown in table 3.10 of the FSBR.

Italy (4)
(a) Rent
(b) —
(c) —
Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators* December 1988

Canada (38):
(a) Rent
(b) Depreciation, interest payments, property taxes, insurance and repairs
(c) Fuel, power and home furnishing
Source: Ministry of Supply and Services, Canadian Economic Observer

Austria (11):
(a) Rent
(b) Loan repayments
(c) Household services
Source: OsterreichischesInstitut fur Wirtschaftsforschung, Monatsberichte June 1987

Belgium (8):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent
(c) —
Source: Institut National de Statistique, *Statistiques Sociales*

Denmark (19):
(a) Rent and maintenance
(b) —
(c) —
Source: Denmark statistics, *Denmark Statistical Yearbook 1988*

Finland (18):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent
(c) Fuel and power
Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators* December 1988

Greece (13):
(a) Rent
(b) —
(c) —
Source: National Statistical Service of Greece, Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1986

Iceland (13):
(a) —
(b) Interest payments, land taxes, rates and maintenance
(c) —
Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators* December 1988

Ireland (6):
(a) Rent
(b) Interest payments, rates, insurance and repairs
(c) —
Source: CSO, *Irish Statistical Bulletin* March 1983

Luxembourg (0):
(a) —
(b) —
(c) —

Netherlands (16):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent
(c) Water
Source: Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook of the Netherlands 1987*

Norway (22):
(a) Rent
(b) Interest payments, rates, insurance and repairs
(c) Fuel and power
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*

Portugal (0):
(a) —
(b) —
(c) —

Spain (18):
(a) Rent
(b) Imputed rent
(c) Fuel and electricity
Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, *España Anuario Estadistico.*

Sweden (26):
(a) Rent
(b) Depreciation, imputed rent, insurance and repairs
(c) Fuel and power
Source: Statistics Sweden, *Statistical Abstract for Sweden 1989.*

Switzerland (17):
(a) Rent
(b) —
(c) —
Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators* December 1988.

Turkey:
(a) n/a
(b) n/a
(c) n/a

Australia (14):
(a) Rent
(b) Interest payments, rates, insurance and repairs
(c) —
Source: Australian High Commission.
Note: The Australians have just altered the way the housing component of their consumer price index is calculated. The changed calculation reflects the fact that once the mortgage rate is above a certain level further increases do not lead to increased interest payments for the many homeowners who hold mortgages with interest rate ceilings.

New Zealand (21):
(a) Rent
(b) Land and house prices, interest payments, rates, insurance and repairs
(c) —
Source: Department of Statistics, *Monthly Abstract of Statistics.*

Civil Service Manpower

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the figures for total Civil Service manpower in 1959, 1964, 1970, 1974, 1979 and 1989, giving the percentage of the total working population which these figures represented in each of these years.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Civil Service manpower

Year	*Thousands*	*Percentage of work force*
1959	647	2·7
1964	658	2·7
1970	701	2·8
1974	692	2·8
1979	732	2·8
1989	572	2·0

Nationalised Industries (Work Force)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the figures for the total work force employed in the nationalised industries in 1959, 1964, 1970, 1974, 1979 and 1989, giving the percentage of the total working population which these figures represented in each of these years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The table gives employees in the nationalised industries on a head count basis for 1961, 1964, 1970, 1974, 1979 and 1988. Figures for 1959 and 1989 are not available.

Nationalised industry employees

	Thousands	*Percentage of working population*
1961	2,152	8·7
1964	1,949	7·7
1970	1,879	7·4
1974	1,777	6·9
1979	1,849	6·9
1988	798	[1]2·8

[1] The term working population was replaced in July 1988 by estimates of work force. The latter includes participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Notes:

1. All data are for the United Kingdom.
2. The number of employees in the nationalised industries is given as in Q2 of the relevant year. Working population data are for June of each year.

CIVIL SERVICE

Executive Agencies

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list both those executive agencies for the Civil Service already set up and those announced as candidates, together with the number of staff in each agency or prospective agency.

Mr. Luce: The current list of those Government activities already established as executive agencies under the next steps initiative and those announced by Departments as candidates, together with the number of staff employed, is as follows:

Executive Agencies Established	[1]*Approximate Numbers*
Vehicle Inspectorate	1,600
Companies House	1,100
Her Majesty's Stationery Office	3,000
National Weights and Measures Laboratory	50
Warren Spring Laboratory	300
Executive agency candidates announced	
Building Research Establishment	700
Central Statistical Office	1,100
Central Office of Information	850
Central Veterinary Laboratory	600
Civil Service College	200
Civil Service Commission Recruitment Service	300
Civil Service Occupational Health Service	150
Crown Suppliers Fuel Branch	30
Defence non-Nuclear Research Establishments	15,000
Department of Registers of Scotland	900
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Directorate	5,400
Driver Testing and Training	2,000
Employment Service	41,000
Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate (Scottish Office)	650
Historic Royal Palaces	300
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	1,000
Insolvency Service	1,500
Laboratory of the Government Chemist	350
Land Registry	8,250
Meteorological Office	2,500
National Physical Laboratory	850
Passport Department	1,000
Patent Office	1,000
Planning Inspectorate	500
QEII Conference Centre	60
Radiocommunications Division, DTI	500
Resettlement Units	600
Royal Parks	600
Social Security Operations	87,000
Training Agency	12,000
Vehicle Component Approval Division, DTp	70
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	70
Northern Ireland Civil Service: Employment and Training Services, Agricultural Research Establishments, Social Security Operations	6,000

[1] Figures are target 1.4.88 figures and are approximate.

Pensions (Retail Prices Index Error)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service, pursuant to his reply of 10 April to the hon. Member for Don Valley, *Official Report,* column *321,* when parliamentary approval was given for funds arising from the retail prices in respect of pensions index error to be repaid.

Mr. Luce: Parliamentary approval was given on 15 March for the payment of awards from the RPI error funds to each of the Civil Service pension organisations.

THE ARTS

European Parliament

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the role of the European Parliament in the fields of arts and culture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The European Parliament is itself responsible for its involvement in the field of arts and culture, and has established a committee on youth culture, education, information and sport. The Parliament has the right to make alterations to certain aspects of the annual budget of the European Community.

Council of Europe

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the role of the Council of Europe in the spheres of arts and culture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Council of Europe has cultural co-operation as one of its agreed objectives. It brings the member states of the European Community into a wider framework of European countries, which all share the desire to maintain and enhance the European cultural dimension.

The council has appointed a standing council for cultural co-operation and its programme and direction in the field of culture are periodically discussed by the Ministers responsible for these matters. It promotes active involvement in cultural affairs by encouraging the appreciation of the European heritage and individual creativity.

TRANSPORT

Vehicles (Safety Devices)

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in fitting devices to vehicles, especially heavy goods vehicles, to prevent them driving too close together; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most effective device is the driver, exercising judgment about a proper distance in the light of speed and driving conditions. Some vehicle manufacturers incorporate useful devices to improve driver awareness, for example of slippery road surfaces. Industry has long-term research in hand in Britain and abroad into electronic control devices. The safety of those has yet to be proven in real traffic conditions. In the meantime we are developing a performance standard for front guards on heavy goods vehicles to prevent under-running by cars. These have been shown to be capable of saving the lives of up to 60 car occupants per year if fitted to all HGVs.

Yacht Construction

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had on the European Community draft proposals for categories of yacht construction; and if he will make it his policy to resist any attempt to link categories of construction with restrictions on use in the United Kingdom or European Community waters.

Mr. Portillo: There is no such draft EC directive at present, although I understand that the EC Commission has discussed with the International Council of Marine Industry Associations whether it would be useful to bring forward proposals for a directive to establish minimum standards and to remove barriers to trade in the boat construction industry within the EC. My right hon. Friend would look very carefully at any proposals for construction and use regulations for boats.

Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has given any safety assurances to *(a)* the Belgian authorities or *(b)* Belgian Members of the European Parliament about the dangers posed by the overflights of plutonium between Japan and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We know of no request for such an assurance; nor is one necessary.

Plutonium flights to Japan, if they take place, will be made in full compliance with international regulations, which require safety for both normal and accident conditions to be built into the design of the container.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all airports used for the export of quantities of plutonium in consignments of 1 g or less; and how often each year such quantities are exported from each airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* No.

The Department does not collect this information on a routine basis.

But I am advised that since 1984 a total of 404 sources or samples of plutonium in quantities of less than 1 g were exported. The large majority of these were sent via Heathrow, with occasional movements via Gatwick and Stansted. Less than 10 samples per year have also been sent from Manchester.

Fawley (Coal Jetty)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Central Electricity Generating Board has withdrawn its application to build a coal jetty and related works at Fawley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 28 April.

Seaborne Garbage

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to monitor the amount of seaborne garbage on United Kingdom beaches since 1 January.

Mr. Portillo: The Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulations 1988 entered into force on 31 December 1988. The Department is considering, together with the Department of the Environment, the most effective way to monitor its impact.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all local authorities which have supplied extra disposal facilities at ports since 1 January for handling shipborne garbage.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is not available. The Merchant Shipping (Reception Facilities for Garbage) Regulations 1988 which came into force on 31 December 1988 require all ports and terminals, including those under local authority control to provide adequate reception facilities for garbage from ships. The Department will shortly complete a survey on what facilities are provided to receive garbage, and at what cost.

FV Inspire

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding all the circumstances of the sinking of the FV Inspire on 5 September 1988; what is the result of any inquiry that has been undertaken; whether any Royal Navy submarines or submarines of any NATO country are known to have been in the vicinity at the time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Inspire foundered off the west coast of Wales on 5 September 1988 with the loss of three lives. A marine surveyor from the Department was appointed to conduct an investigation into the loss. A summary report of his findings is being produced and I will send the hon. Member a copy. I am advised that there were no United Kingdom or NATO country submarines in the vicinity at the time of the casualty.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has as to the total cost of the oil spillage caused by the El Omar in December 1988 in the Milford Haven, including clean-up costs and insurance claims; and what costs have been received from the ship's owners.

Mr. Portillo: The Milford Haven port authority is responsible for oil pollution control within the port area. The Department was not directly involved in the clean-up operations and has no information as to the total costs incurred or compensation received.

Clean-up was undertaken and costs were incurred by the Milford Haven port authority; Texaco, the operators of the terminal where the El Omar was discharging cargo; and the local authorities bordering the haven. It is for them and any other parties suffering damage as a result of the spillage to each seek reimbursement from the owners of the vessel, who are statutorily liable and must have a contract of insurance to cover that liability.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contingency plans he has to cope with a major oil spillage off the west coast of Scotland; what equipment he has stored on the west coast for such an eventuality; and where this is stored.

Mr. Portillo: Because it is impossible to predict where or when a tanker accident may occur, the contingency arrangements to combat pollution at sea developed following the Amoco Cadiz incident in 1978 consist of a dedicated contingency response unit on constant standby to direct and control clean-up operations, together with highly mobile resources positioned at various locations around the United Kingdom, from where they can be deployed quickly to the west coast of Scotland or any other part of the United Kingdom that may be threatened by a major oil spillage.

Included in those resources are dispersant spraying aircraft, two of which are permanently based at Inverness; stocks of dispersant at strategic locations including Paisley, Oban, and Stornoway; oil recovery equipment at Aberdeen; cargo transfer equipment; DAFS fishery protection vessels and commercial tugs fitted with spraying equipment and carrying stocks of dispersant; and stockpiles of specialised beach cleaning equipment, one of which is at Cambusbarron, near Stirling. If necessary, Royal Navy and Royal Maritime Auxiliary vessels in the Clyde, with dispersant spraying equipment, would be called on, together with whatever resources might be available in the private sector, including those owned by oil companies in connection with their responsibilities for clean-up of port terminal and offshore installation spillages.

Local authorities on the west coast of Scotland all have their own contingency plans for dealing with coastal clean up and can call on advice and assistance from this Department.

Port authorities generally have their own contingency plans and again, advice and assistance would be provided by this Department in the event of a major spill.

Air Transport

Mr. Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has considered the implications for his policy on air transport of the judgment by the Court of Session in the case brought by Air 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend will consider the judgment of the court and will make an announcement shortly.

Roads (Efficiency Scrutiny)

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report of the efficiency scrutiny of his Department's activities in relation to local authorities' capital expenditure on roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend is arranging for this report to be published today. Copies will be sent to the local authority associations and placed in the Library. Twenty-seven of the 38 recommendations have been accepted. We propose to discuss the implications of a further seven with the associations later in the year.

Roads (Staffordshire)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what allocation his Department gave Staffordshire county council for *(a)* capital road building programmes, *(b)* the maintenance of existing trunk roads and *(c)* other works relating to pedestrian safety for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what was the imputed amount assigned for works within Stoke-on-Trent boundaries in each of these years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* It is not possible to separate expenditure on work solely related to pedestrian safety. Pedestrian safety is one objective of the programme of new construction and maintenance on national roads in Staffordshire. It is also an objective of the highway authority's programme of new construction and maintenance on its own roads.

The capital allocations for new construction of local roads in Staffordshire are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	10·21
1988-89	8·67
1989-90	7·66

The council received about £3 million of transport supplementary grant in each of these years.

Expenditure on local roads maintenance is the responsibility of the county council.

Its expenditure on this function has however fallen short of its grant-related expenditure assessment in each of the last three years.

The national roads programme is not analysed by local authority areas.

No separate figures are available for expenditure within Stoke-on-Trent.

Underground Railways (Safety)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what simulated tests were made by London Underground Ltd of evacuation of a full length tube train carrying a rush hour overload in a single line tunnel and supervised by a single member of the railway staff, prior to the extension of one person operation; and if he will list any such occasions since that adoption, carried out in the course of an exercise or in an emergency.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* No simulated evacuations with a rush hour overload have been carried out, though exercises with non-capacity loadings have been undertaken from time to time, most

recently at Aldwych in summer 1988. London Underground Ltd. assures me that train operators have been, and will continue to be, trained in the techniques of evacuation. It tells me, too, that modifications are in progress to prevent the automatic application of train brakes when the passenger-operated alarm system is used, thereby minimising the risk of trains stopping away from stations in an emergency.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Lomé IV

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations for Lomé IV.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following the ACP/EC ministerial meeting in Brazzaville in February, work on the renegotiation of Lomé has continued. It is important to make progress in preparation for the next ministerial negotiating meeting at the beginning of June.

"Interdependence and Cultural Development"

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the Council of Europe's European public campaign on North-South interdependence and its solidarity colloquy entitled "Interdependence and Cultural Development", organised by the secretary-general of the Council of Europe in the framework of the World Decade for Cultural Development, held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 7-8 April 1988; and what input Her Majesty's Government have made to this colloquy.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government supported the aims of the Council of Europe's campaign and gave it a grant of £70,000. The Government also met the expenses of the British representative to the European organising committee. In February last year I addressed a round table on developing country debt organised as part of the campaign. The Government made no input to the colloquy on interdependence and cultural development, which took place in Lisbon last April.

Aid Policy

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to increase aid, particularly in the areas of primary health care and education, which would specifically improve conditions for women in recipient countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 24 April, at column 371.

PRIME MINISTER

Delors Report

Mr. Soames: To ask the Prime Minister what is Her Majesty's Government's response to the Delors report.

The Prime Minister: The Delors report envisages a transfer of sovereignty from member states to a new central monetary institution and central control of fiscal policy. It states that economic and monetary union would not be possible within the terms of the existing treaty and that a new treaty would be needed. Paragraph 39 of the report states that economic and monetary union must be viewed as a single process and that the decision to enter upon the first stage should be a decision to embark on the entire process.

The Government's views on the matters dealt with in the report were set out in the speech given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 24 January and in his remarks following the meeting of the ECOFIN Council in Luxembourg on 17 April. My right hon. Friend made it clear that we cannot accept the transfer of sovereignty which is implied by the Delors report. Economic and monetary union as spelt out in the report would in effect require political union, a United States of Europe. That is not on the agenda now or for the foreseeable future. My right hon. Friend also made it clear that the Government do not believe there should be further treaty amendment as proposed by the Delors report.

Environment Seminar

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the agenda and list of invited participants for the seminar on the environment at Chequers on 26 April.

The Prime Minister: Those attending included Ministers and representatives of universities, scientific and research institutes and industry. The agenda included a discussion on scientific assessment of climatic change and its impact, measures to mitigate the greenhouse effect, and the international context.

World War 2 (Anniversary)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to arrange for 3 September 1989, the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of world war 2 to be commemorated as either a British or a European day of thanksgiving for peace.

The Prime Minister: No. I do not think that the anniversary of the outbreak of war would be an appropriate occasion to commemorate the achievement and continuation of peace.

European Social Charter

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister what support Her Majesty's Government are giving to the proposals for a European social charter, drawn up by the Economic and Social Committee of the European Community.

The Prime Minister: The European Council at its meeting in Rhodes in December 1988 asked the Commission to propose a charter of social rights taking into account the Council of Europe charter. There are as yet no formal proposals from the European Commission for any statement of social rights within the Community. We want to see positive and practical proposals to create more jobs.

World Bank and IMF

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the responsibilities of *(a)* Her Majesty's Treasury and *(b)* the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for matters relating to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The Prime Minister: The Treasury is responsible for matters relating to the IMF and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—mainly through the Overseas Development Administration—for matters relating to the World Bank. The Treasury focuses on the world economy, the international monetary system and debt, whereas the Overseas Development Administration focuses on developmental concerns. Instructions to our executive director in Washington for use at both institutions are co-ordinated as necessary between the two Departments and with the Bank of England and other Departments.

Public Buildings (Rent)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government are considering proposals for the payment of rent for buildings used by *(a)* the National Health Service, *(b)* the police forces, *(c)* the armed forces and *(d)* the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555) set out the Government's plans to introduce a system for charging health authorities for the use of their existing capital assets and any new capital investment. The charging system will be designed to provide a strong incentive for the efficient use of assets while ensuring that there is no reduction in the funds available for patient services. Rent, in the form of property repayment service, is already paid on the civil estate, including 10 Downing street. In the case of the armed forces, the Ministry of Defence, as part of its new management strategy, is considering how best to ensure that budget holders make the best use of defence buildings. Payment of rent for buildings occupied by the police service is a matter for the police authorities.

Planning Appeals and Petitions

Ms. Harman: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her oral reply to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on Thursday 20 April, *Official Report*, column 452, she will set out the criteria enabling persons *(a)* to appeal at a planning inquiry into a new motorway or railway, and *(b)* to petition against such a proposal heard before a Private Bill Committee.

The Prime Minister: The criteria for planning inquiries into a new motorway are set out in the Highways (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1976 (SI 1976 No. 721), a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Statutory objectors (including all persons whose property is directly affected) have the right to appear. Others may do so at the discretion of the person holding the inquiry. There is no available procedure for giving planning approval for new railways. Persons or organisations whose property or interests are directly and specifically affected by a private Bill may petition against it and be heard by a Committee on the Bill. If a petitioner's locus standi is challenged by the promoter his right to appear is decided by the Court of Referees (in the Lords by the Committee on the Bill) under "Private Business Standing Orders" or in accordance with the practice of the House.

Football Matches (Deaths)

Mr. Howell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give details of the date, time and place of the 300 deaths associated with attendance at football matches to which she referred in her oral answer to the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns 799-800.

The Prime Minister: Details of the known post-war incidents at football matches involving British teams leading to fatalities among spectators are as follows:

Location	*Date and time (where known)*	*Number of fatalities*
Bolton (Burnden Park)	9 March 1946 1500 hours (approx)	33
Glasgow (Ibrox Park)	2 January 1971	66
Middlesbrough (Ayresome Park)	12 January 1980	2
Bradford (Valley Parade)	11 May 1985 1545 hours (approx)	56
Birmingham (St. Andrew's Park)	11 May 1985 1750 hours (approx)	1
Brussels (Heysel Stadium)	29 May 1985 1930 hours (approx)	39
Sheffield (Hillsborough)	15 April 1989 1506 hours (approx)	95
	Total	292

Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister whether at her global climatology seminar on 26 April, the issue of tropical rain forests was discussed; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes, the seminar reinforced the importance of the conservation of tropical rain forests and of our support for forestry in developing countries.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 2 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

SCOTLAND

Health Education

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure by each Department and Government-funded health education agency on mass media advertising on *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* dental health, *(d)* drugs, *(e)* AIDS, *(f)* family planning, *(g)* immunisation, *(h)* coronary heart disease, *(i)* the "be all you can campaign" and *(j)* and any other health campaign in each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland national health education is the responsibility of the Scottish Health Education Group. It is not possible to identify separately mass media advertising costs, but the following table gives details of expenditure by the group in the areas shown.

£000

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Smoking	244	541	255	212	207	265	297
Alcohol	118	62	122	80	173	195	214
Dental Health	23	48	53	71	45	39	32
Drugs	—	—	—	340	450	285	373
AIDS	—	—	—	—	—	124	86
Family Planning	33	74	60	19	21	22	30
Immunisation	—	—	—	—	—	—	86
Other	1,041	1,012	1,502	1,659	1,537	1,648	1,602
Total	1,459	1,737	1,992	2,381	2,433	2,578	2,720

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds were allocated from his Department for directly commissioned research relevant to mental handicap for each of the past five years; and whether he intends those funds to be increased over the next five to 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A range of research projects relevant to mental handicap have been funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Scottish Education Department using a variety of approaches. The figures are:

	£'000
1984-85	97
1985-86	186
1986-87	145
1987-88	167
1988-89	[1]161

[1] Provisional.

Mental handicap is a priority area for research and the Scottish Office will favourably consider any application for funding for soundly based relevant projects.

Community Charge

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether *(a)* Royal Navy and *(b)* Merchant Navy personnel who are away from shore (i) for six months or more continuously, within a fiscal year or (ii) for six months or more within a fiscal year are liable to pay poll tax.

Mr. Lang: It is for community charges registration officers to decide in the light of all the facts and circumstances relating to individual cases whether a person is solely or mainly resident in their area and thus liable to pay the personal community charge.

Adoption

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the rights of access to centrally and locally held information of a person who was adopted; and what is the statutory basis upon which an adopted person can seek and obtain information about birth and natural parentage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Scotland the Registrar General is empowered to disclose to an adopted person aged 17 or over information which links the person's entry in the adopted children register to the original entry in the birth register. The statutory basis on which the Registrar General holds this information and controls access to it is provided by section 45 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978. Under the terms of the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 1984, adoption agencies are also empowered to disclose to an adopted person aged 17 or over information held by the adoption agency relating to that person's adoption.

Pre-school Education

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current percentage of children of pre-school age currently enrolled in state-run pre-school education in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of children in local authority nursery schools and the number of children under five in all local authority schools in September 1987 expressed as percentages of 3 and 4-year-olds in the population were 31·0 and 38·7 respectively. It is estimated

that when those attending pre-school playgroups and day nurseries are included about 80 per cent. of 3 and 4-year-olds were involved.

Water Charges

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which classes of people are exempt from water charges in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: People are exempt from water charges in Scotland if their premises do not receive a public water supply. Further, any person detailed in schedule 1A to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as exempted from the personal community charge, is also exempted from the personal community water charge.

Remote Areas

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the area of land in *(a)* the Cairngorms, and *(b)* the Grampian mountains as a whole which was more than 3 km from a road or vehicular track prior to 1960; whether this area has changed; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available centrally, but it is clear that following the construction of the access road to the Cairngorm ski development and other vehicular tracks the areas in question are smaller than they were in 1960.

Water Quality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department is carrying out into the effects of high levels of nitrates and lead in water supplies on *(a)* children and *(b)* adults.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. The level of nitrates found in Scottish waters is low and does not present a health problem for either children or adults.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many and which of the water supplies containing excess of nitrate or lead according to the European Community standards will achieve the acceptable standards *(a)* in 1989 and *(b)* in 1990;

(2) how many water supplies in Scotland do not comply with the European Community standards for nitrate or lead content of water supplies; and where they are located.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: One small water supply source in Dumfries and Galloway region and six in Grampian region may at times exceed the European Commission standard for nitrate. That in Dumfries and Galloway will achieve compliance in 1989; those in Grampian are due to be abandoned, two in 1989-90 and the others not later than 1991-92. For information on areas where the lead content of tap water may exceed the European Commission standard I would refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 22 March 1989, at columns *662-64*. In 1989 the acceptable standard will be achieved in 22 of these areas in Dumfries and Galloway, 12 in Grampian, eight in Highland, six in Strathclyde and 10 in Tayside. A further seven areas in Strathclyde will achieve the standard in 1990.

Environmental Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those areas of policy implementation in regard to environmental safety and regulation which have failed since May 1979; and if he will make a statement on the steps he intends to take to rectify these failures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Government policies have been applied successfully.

Police (Central Service)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many claims for damages arising out of alleged breaches of delictual duty have been intimated to each chief constable in respect of the actions of police constables engaged in central duties since 1 January 1967.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no reason to believe that any such claims have been made but the information requested is not held centrally. A constable whilst on central service is not under the general direction of the chief constable of his home force. Accordingly, the chief constable would not be liable in reparation for any wrongful act or omission on the part of a constable on central service.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the number of incidents in Scotland involving central service police officers who have acted as though they possessed the powers and privileges of police officers in each year since the coming into force of the Police Act 1967.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No such incidents have been brought to the notice of the Scottish Home and Health Department.

Consultants

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which health boards are to appoint extra consultants; what criteria were used in the allocation of the extra posts; which health boards made applications for more consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of hospital consultants in Scotland has been expanding rapidly—by over 3 per cent. last year. A further increase in the number of consultants has been encouraged by a Scottish Home and Health Department circular on hospital medical staffing in Scotland issued to all health boards in December 1988, and I shall be keeping a careful watch to see that progress is maintained. It is for health boards to create new consultant posts, subject to the agreement of the Department, which is advised by the Advisory Committee on Medical Establishments on manpower considerations. Consultant posts recommended in the 1987 report "Staffing the Service—The Next Decade" do not require departmental approval.

Enterprise Zones

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent assessment his officials have made of the operation of enterprise zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: None. Data provided by the Industry Department for Scotland relating to Scottish enterprise

zones are included in the fourth annual report "Enterprise Zone Information 1986-87" published by the Department of the Environment on 18 April 1989.

Sand Eels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on 5 April, *Official Report*, column 237, he is in a position to estimate what approximate percentage of the stock of O group sand eels was taken by the Shetland fishery in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested, based on the most recent data available, is set out in the table. The quantity of O-group sand eels taken in the Shetland fishery after 1 July is expressed as a percentage of the estimated number alive at 1 July, when most of this age group are recruited to the fishery.

Year	*Percentage*
1974	7
1975	13
1976	10
1977	11
1978	15
1979	5
1980	15
1981	17
1982	20
1983	7
1984	17
1985	10
1986	7
1987	18
1988	n.a.

SDA and HIDB

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his intentions on the future policies of the Scottish Development Agency and the HIDB in relation to their on-going work in relation to the National Trust for Scotland; and if he will give specific examples of projects to be undertaken by Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Lang: We are currently reassessing the proposals in the Scottish Enterprise White Paper in the light of all the responses received, and will announce our detailed decisions in due course.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the Scottish percentage contribution of United Kingdom manufacturing activity in 1970, 1979, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Lang: The following figures relate to gross domestic product in manufacturing industries in Scotland as a percentage of manufacturing gross domestic product in the United Kingdom.

GDP in manufacturing industry: Scotland as a percentage of the United Kingdom

	Percentage
1970	8·3
1979	8·5
1986	7·9
1987	8·0

Source: IDS and regional accounts.

EC Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of loans made to Scotland by the European investment bank in 1988.

Mr. Rifkind *(holding answer 28 April 1989):* Loans are negotiated directly between the EIB and prospective borrowers. The total amount of loans disbursed in Scotland in 1988 was as follows.

Number	*Amount £*
3	221,000,000

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he had with officials of the Football Supporters Association before his statement on 17 April, calling for all-seater stadia for major football clubs in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: None.

Private Zoos

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what safety regulations or guidelines apply to private zoos; how often they require inspection; and by whom the inspections are carried out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

All zoos in Great Britain are licensed under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, the provisions of which are administered principally by the appropriate local authority.

Under the Act, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has laid down standards of modern zoo practice, which specify standards for ensuring animal welfare, in addition to the safety and security of visitors. These standards relate to all licensed zoos, insofar as they are applicable to the nature of the collection.

Licensed zoos are subject to regular inspections which fall within three categories: first a periodic inspection, approximately every three years, by a team of up to five inspectors chosen jointly by the local authority and the Secretary of State; secondly, an annual informal inspection conducted by a single inspector appointed by the local authority; and thirdly, a special inspection, which may be arranged at any time when the local authority considers that the circumstances warrant one.

Television Licence

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, North of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *91*, if he will list those areas where television reminders expiring on 31 March were delayed in the post; and if he will reimburse the price increase to those persons who were therefore unable to purchase their television licences at the old price.

Mr. Renton: Reports of late delivery of renewal notices have been received from Chelmsford, Milton Keynes, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Newport, Stoke-on-Trent, Taunton and Watford.

Renewal notices are issued as a service to licence holders and are not a legal requirement. Licences can be renewed up to a month in advance at post offices or by writing to the National TV Licence Records Office and no renewal notice is required for this purpose. It would not therefore be appropriate to reimburse the price increase to licence holders who did not renew March expiry licences until after the fee had gone up.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women there are in prison in the United Kingdom according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Friday 28 April, the most recent date for which figures are available, 1,769 females were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. No female prisoners were held in police cells.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have been injured in prison in the United Kingdom according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information is published at appendix 5 of the "Report of the Work of the Prison Service, April 1987-March 1988." Only information relating to self-injury is collected.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women have committed suicide while being detained in prison in the United Kingdom according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1980 there have been two suicides of women at prison department establishments; the inquest on one similar death has not yet taken place. Deaths in prisons in Scotland and Northern Ireland are a matter for their respective Secretaries of State.

Civil Defence

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new information has become available to account for the discrepancy in the information provided about emergency centres in his Department's office report on the implementation of the Civil Defence Regulations 1983 at October 1988 and that provided from the same source in response to earlier parliamentary questions.

Mr. John Patten: Information on emergency centres is drawn from annual reports submitted by local authorities under the Government's planned programme for implementation of the 1983 regulations (PPI). Records are therefore regularly updated according to reported progress, and earlier answers gave the latest information available at the time of the questions.

Mr. Gerald Bowen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the outcome of the senior level seminar at the Civil Defence college in November 1988 on the review of the arrangements for handling peacetime emergencies will become available.

Mr. John Patten: We hope to make an announcement on the result of the review as a whole shortly.

Drugs Offences

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to establish compulsory rehabilitation centres as an alternative to prison for drug misusers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our proposals in the Green Paper, "Punishment, Custody and the Community" (CM. 424) were that treatment for drug abuse could be part of a programme of supervision in the community for suitable offenders. Effective treatment would need the co-operation of the offender, so it could not be made compulsory. We have no plans to set up compulsory centres.

Youth Work

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which local education authorities have successfully applied for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for new youth work posts in the last five years, specifying for each authority the year in which section 11 funding was approved.

Mr. John Patten: The following local authorities have received approval for section 11 grant for new posts in youth work since the current criteria were introduced in October 1986:

1987

Warwickshire
Bury

1988

Rotherham
Bradford
Bedfordshire

1989

Nottinghamshire

The information requested in respect of earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he can estimate the number of police officers to be involved within the West Midlands police in the Hillsborough inquiry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that on 25 April some 300 of his officers were involved. The number is subject to continuous review.

Postal Votes

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are issued to medical practitioners with regard to pregnant women and qualification criteria for a postal vote.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office does not issue guidance to medical practitioners on the arrangements for absent voting; the requirements are clearly set out on the relevant application form. As my right hon. Friend explained in his reply to a question from the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 2 March, at column *274*, we

are reviewing the absent voting arrangements. If the hon. Member is aware of a particular difficulty, perhaps she would write to me about it.

Turkish Immigrants

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the number of illegal Turkish immigrants in London.

Mr. Renton: It is not practicable to make such an estimate.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which EEC countries require Turkish nationals to have visas when visiting.

Mr. Renton: Belgium, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from local authorities and hon. Members suggesting an amnesty for illegal Turkish immigrants.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend has received one such letter—from the chief executive of the London borough of Hackney.

Roc Sandford

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether any of the officers involved in bringing the unsuccessful prosecution of Roc Sandford have subsequently been promoted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the four police officers involved in the prosecution of Mr. Sandford have, like many officers in the force, continued to serve in the same ranks since his acquittal in 1985.

Immigration (Detainees)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received against transferring the main place of detention for Immigration Act detainees from Latchmere house in Richmond to Haslar in Gosport.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A number of bodies concerned with the welfare of detainees, including those listed, and a number of hon. and right hon. Members and noble Lords have made representations or written about the proposal to transfer Immigration Act detainees from Latchmere House to Haslar.

British Refugee Council
Charter 87
Immigration Law Practitioners Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Richmond Borough Council
Richmond Citizens Advice Bureau
United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service

Parole

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responses he has received to the report of the review committee on the parole system in England and Wales, which sat under the chairmanship of Lord Carlisle of Bucklow, from interested organisations and in particular, the council of Her Majesty's circuit judges and the High Court judges; and with what result.

Mr. John Patten: We have received 20 responses to the Carlisle report. These came from interested individuals and organisations including judges, the Parole Board, the Magistrates Association, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Central Council of Probation Committees, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, the National Association of Senior Probation Officers, the National Association of Probation Officers, the Justices Clerks Society, the Labour party, NACRO and the Howard League. The recommendations of the Carlisle report were far-reaching and we are considering the best way forward, taking account of the comments which we have received and of the implications for the prison population.

Computers

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to make a response to the Law Commission's working paper No. 110 on computer misuse; whether he will make it public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Law Commission's working paper set out legal issues for consultation purposes, but did not make firm recommendations. The central question was whether there should be a new offence of hacking. The Government have not yet reached a considered view on this question and the commission has been so informed. I understand that the Law Commission hopes to publish its report making recommendations within the next few months.

Animals (Tests)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent trends in the number of animals used in LD50 tests.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The advisory committee on the administration of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 estimated in 1979 that the number of LD50 tests which were carried out in 1977 was about 229,500. The "Statistics on Scientific Procedures on Living Animals 1987" included for the first time statistical returns for these procedures, of which these were 111,313 in 1987 (Cm. 515; table 14).

The Government are supporting international work on acute toxicity testing and on further reducing the need for formal LD50 tests as part of their policy of encouraging international regulatory bodies which require such tests to review the continuing need for them.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with respect to the support grades in his Department *(a)* what is the number of staff employed, *(b)* how many vacancies there are and how many of these have existed over one month and over three months, *(c)* how many temporary and casual appointments there are and *(d)* how much overtime was worked by them in London and elsewhere.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are 750 staff in post and 34 vacancies in the office support grades in the Home Office. Twenty five of these vacancies were unfilled one month ago and 19 three months ago.

The Department has 17 casual staff in these grades.

Staff in support grades worked more than 2,500 hours overtime in the London area during the last three-month period for which figures are available. Over 3,800 hours were worked elsewhere.

Siemens Printers

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Siemens ND3 printers are used by his Department, either in-house or through a private contract; and what is the location of each.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Community Charge

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require electoral registration oficers to inspect community charge registers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. It is for each electoral registration officer to decide how best to discharge his statutory duty to have a house-to-house or other sufficient inquiry made as to the persons entitled to be registered. Home Office guidance to electoral registration officers, issued last August, draws attention to their right to inspect the community charge register and the possibility thereby of improving the accuracy of the electoral register.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the office he established in Liverpool to process British citizenship applications opened; how many staff are employed there; what is the current delay between letters arriving and being opened; what is the current total of letters to be opened; what is the average delay in dealing with applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Liverpool nationality office opened on 22 August 1988, and on 26 April 1989 119 staff were employed there. The average times taken to complete applications concluded in March 1989 were 16 months for registrations and 22 months for naturalisations.

Good progress continues to be made in processing applications for registration under the transitional provisions of the British Nationality Act 1981 and, up to the end of March 1989, the Liverpool nationality office had completed action on over 36,000 applications. The remaining registration applications at the Liverpool nationality office will be completed by the end of this financial year.

All correspondence to the immigration and nationality department is being opened and acknowledged within one day of receipt or, where fees are involved, immediately after the fees have been brought to account.

Iranians

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iranians *(a)* arrived and *(b)* left for each of the last eight years; and what has been the total number of Iranians in the United Kingdom each year.

Mr. Renton: The number of Iranian citizens admitted into the United Kingdom is given in the table. Estimates of the numbers who left the United Kingdom could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It is estimated from the labour force survey that since 1981 the number of Iranian citizens resident in Great Britain has been in the region of 25,000.

Admissions into the United Kingdom of Iranian citizens, 1981 to 1988

	Number
1981	36,000
1982	34,000
1983	43,000
1984	59,000
1985	67,200
1986	58,900
1987	45,000
1988	35,900

Immigrants (Exceptional Leave)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the term of the exceptional leave granted, and why it was granted in the case of the two men named in his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *92*.

Mr. Renton: Both men were granted exceptional leave under the policy relating to Sri Lankan Tamils announced on 20 May 1985, at column *273*. Leave was initially granted to them in September 1986, and was renewed on application. They were last granted leave for periods of 12 months in June and July last year.

Police (Central Service)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims for damages arising out of alleged breaches of duty under the law of tort have been intimated to each chief constable in respect of the actions of police constables engaged in central duties since 1 January 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under section 43 of the Police Act 1964 a police officer who has been seconded to central services ceases to be a member of a police force for the duration of his secondment. Accordingly, while on central service he is not under the direction and control of his chief officer of police and the question of the chief officer's liability for torts does not arise.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding the number of incidents involving central service police officers who have acted as though they possessed the powers and privileges of police officers in each year since the coming into force of the Police Act 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available.

Special Constables

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special constables are employed in South Yorkshire; and what are their qualifications and selection procedures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As at 31 December 1988 there were 309 special constables in South Yorkshire police. I understand from the chief constable of South Yorkshire that the qualifications for entry into the special constabulary in South Yorkshire are basically that applicants must be of British nationality, physically fit, of good character, have satisfactory eye sight, have an education standard adequate for their duties, be aged between 18½ and 50 and reside in the force area. Men should be not less than 167cm and women 162cm in height.

Applicants who meet these requirements are interviewed by a divisional chief superintendent and a special constabulary divisional commandant, who make recommendations to the chief constable. The chief constable then decides whether to accept or decline the applications.

Press Law Review

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce the result of the independent press law review group; and what will be its membership and relationship to the Government.

Mr. Renton: We are considering the terms of reference for the review of privacy and related matters, and the composition of the committee which will carry it out. A further announcement will be made shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the committee he will appoint to review the press will include representatives of *(a)* the churches, *(b)* consumer groups, *(c)* the voluntary sector, *(d)* education, *(e)* the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and *(f)* the trade unions;

(2) whether his review of the press will consider *(a)* the right of reply, *(b)* the law of confidentiality, *(c)* cheque-book journalism, *(d)* the role and future of the Press council, *(e)* the role of independent directors, *(f)* ownership and *(g)* freedom of information;

(3) whether it is his intention to publish *(a)* the report of the committee due to inquire into the press, and *(b)* the evidence presented to that committee;

(4) whether he will publish the detailed terms of reference of his review of the press;

(5) whether his review of the press will cover *(a)* the traditional press, *(b)* regional press, and *(c)* free sheets.

Mr. Renton: We are considering the terms of reference for the review of privacy and related matters, and the composition of the committee which will carry it out. A further announcement will be made shortly.

Baby Food

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report*, the number of incidents of contamination of baby food notified to the police on each day since the first incident was reported on 7 April.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that since 7 April the number of reported incidents in England, Wales and Scotland of contamination of baby food notified to the police each day are as follows:

Number of reported incidents

Date	*Number*
April 7	1
April 9	1
April 10	4
April 15	1
April 17	3
April 20	1
April 22	1
April 24	5

Reliable national figures for the period since 24 April are not yet available centrally.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the police notified his Department of the existence of the threat to safety involved in the contamination of baby food.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office was notified on 26 April. I understand that the police were in touch with the Department of Health some days earlier. The police had previously ensured that local warnings about the threat to safety were issued whenever specific incidents of contamination were discovered.

Laboratory Staff

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if his Department makes a local pay addition to secretarial, clerical and typing staff at the central research and support establishment and at the regional forensic science laboratory, both at Aldermaston; and if he has any proposals for the payment of an addition to forensic scientists at the laboratories;

(2) if he has any proposals for the payment of a special pay addition to forensic scientists working at the central research laboratory and at the regional forensic science laboratory, both at Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will introduce for forensic scientists working at the central research laboratory and at the regional forensic science laboratory, both at Aldermaston, a new pay structure including a special pay addition, and similar to that affecting scientists employed by the Ministry of Defence working on the same Aldermaston site in the atomic weapons research establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: From 1 April 1989 clerical, secretarial and typing staff at the central research and support establishment and forensic science laboratory at Aldermaston, who have one year's service, receive a local pay addition of £600 pa.

The case for special pay increase to scientific staff up to senior scientific officer level at these establishments on the grounds of recruitment and retention difficulties is under consideration.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the morale of scientists within the Home Office forensic science service, in the light of the comments made in the recent report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, (HC 686).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will be responding to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on the forensic science service shortly.

The forensic science service is now emerging from a period of uncertainty. The Select Committee recognised

that a good deal has been done recently to build up morale and tackle the other problems which the service faces. We are keeping up the pace of this work.

Hillsborough Football Ground

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to the numbers of police officers deployed *(a)* outside the ground and *(b)* inside the ground at the Sheffield, Hillsborough football ground in each of the last 10 years when FA cup semi-final matches have been played ther;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to how many police officers were involved in the total operation for policing FA cup semi-final matches in each of the last 10 years that they have been played at Sheffield, Hillsborough.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the South Yorkshire police that the total number of police officers involved in 1988 was 1,173 and in 1989 1,133. Of these totals the number of officers dedicated to policing inside the ground in 1988 was 286 and in 1989 266. Figures for previous years are not readily available.

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of South Yorkshire as to the proportion of the cost for the policing operations at Sheffield, Hillsborough football ground that has been paid by *(a)* Sheffield Wednesday football club and *(b)* the police authority in each of the last 10 years when FA cup semi-final matches have been played there.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that FA Cup semi-final matches were played at Hillsborough in 1980, 1987 and 1988. This year's match was abandoned. No information on policing costs is available for 1980 and the costs for this year's match have not yet been calculated. Sheffield Wednesday football club does not bear any part of the costs of these matches, since the costs falling upon the organisers are met by the Football Association. The FA met 26·3 per cent. of the total costs in 1987 and 49·8 per cent. in 1988.

"Punishment, Custody in the Community"

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many responses he has received from organisations and individuals to the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody in the Community"; and how many of those organisations and individuals support the need for a new punishment in the custody order as outlined in part 3 of the aforenamed document.

Mr. John Patten Over 160 responses have been received. The Green Paper put forward three possible variations of the new sentence, which would have a number of components. Those who replied frequently supported some elements but not others.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list comprehensively those organisations which have so far submitted a response to the Home Office Green Paper, "Punishment, Custody in the Community" published in July 1988.

Mr John Patten: The main organisations who responded to the Green Paper are as follows. In addition, responses were received from 59 probation services, probation committees and liaison committees, from 16 magistrates groups, benches and juvenile panels, from four social service departments and from a wide range of interested individuals and groups.

Organisations who submitted comments on 'Punishment, Custody and the Community'

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
Aquarius
Coventry and Warwickshire Alcohol Advisory Service
The Conservative Women's National Committee
The Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice
Greater Manchester Police Authority
The Police Federation of England and Wales
The Police Superintendents' Association
The Offenders Tag Association
Forum for Initiatives on Reparation and Mediation
Yorkshire and Humberside Intermediate Treatment Association
Leeds Adult Tracking
The Prison Reform Trust
Action on Youth Crime
London and Southwark Prison and Penal Reforms Group
The Association for Juvenile Justice
The Children's Legal Centre
Corby and Kettering Juvenile Liaison Bureau
The Children's Society
Barnardos
Save the Children
The Rainer Foundation
Community Service Volunteers
Nottingham Black Initiative
The National Association of Victim Support Schemes
Bristol Victims Support Scheme
The Football League
The Trades Union Congress
The National Association of Local Government Officers
The Crown Prosecution Service
The Magistrates' Association
The Association of Chief Officers of Probation
The National Association of Probation Officers
The National Association of Senior Probation Officers
The Central Council of Probation Committees
The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
The Prison Governors' Association
The Justices' Clerks' Society
The Association of County Councils
The Association of Directors of Social Services

Mr. Morton Hammer and Family

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet in a position to give a decision in the case of Mr. Morton Hammer and family, ref: H297787.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Mr. Morton Hammer's case cannot be resolved until his solicitors supply information requested of them in February by the immigration department. As soon as that information is available the application will be considered and Mr. Hammer notified of the result direct. Mr. Hammer has been given two months leave to enter the United Kingdom to enable him or his representatives to submit the details required.

Data Protection

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has as to the number of alleged breaches of the Data Protection Act;

how many of these relate to breaches of confidentiality; how many have been proved; how many cases are still under investigation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to the penalties which have been imposed on companies, and individual organisations for breaches of the Data Protection Act in cases concerning confidentiality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The Data Protection Registrar does not collect information in the form requested. Details of those cases in which enforcement action is taken are published in his annual report to Parliament.

Sporting Events (Fatalities)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding fatalities among spectators at sporting events during the past 10 years.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has published statistics relating to fatal accidents in England and Wales occurring during sporting and leisure activities since 1982. The figures for fatalities amongst spectators are as follows:

Number of fatalities

Year	*Number*
1982	2
1983	1
1984	3
1985	56
1986	1
1987	4

Source: OPCS 'Monitor' reference DH4.
Notes:
The 1985 figure does not include one fatality at Birmingham City football ground.
Figures for 1988 not yet available.

In addition, I understand that two people died in 1980 as a result of the collapse of a pillar at Ayresome Park football ground, Middlesbrough.

Mrs. Laurie Clare Marlborough

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester as to the authority under which police officers *(a)* arrested and *(b)* handed over to American military authorities Mrs. Laurie Clare Marlborough of Heaton Norris, Stockport, and as to whether the code of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act was observed in relation to her arrest and detention;

(2) when Her Majesty's Government was informed under the terms of the 1951 Agreement regarding the status of forces of parties to the North Atlantic Treaty by the United States Government that Mrs. Laurie Clare Marlborough of Heaton Norris, Stockport, was a deserter from the United States Navy; what requests were made by the United States Government; what response was made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 7 April 1989]:* I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the chief constable of Greater Manchester police that the Metropolitan police were informed on 19 October 1988 that Mrs. Marlborough was a deserter from the United States Navy. After inquiries regarding her nationality status had been completed, Stockport police were requested on 29 March 1989 to arrest her. Mrs. Marlborough was arrested on the same day under section 13 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 and handed over to the United States Navy authorities on the following day.

I further understand that the provisions of the codes of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 were fully complied with; and that the matter is now the subject of a complaint which is being investigated under the provisions of part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received over the last 10 years from the organisation European Nuclear Disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not have a record of representations received from the organisation European Nuclear Disarmament over the last 10 years. The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Namibia

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will report on the progress being made towards a peaceful resolution in Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: Agreements have been reached on a framework for the return of SWAPO forces to positions north of 16th parallel in Angola. It is important that these agreements are put into effect and that all parties abide by their undertakings in the UN plan.

Khatchaturian Family

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs why the British high commission in Calcutta has refused permission for Mrs. Jenny Khatchaturian, her husband Mr. Baron Max Khatchaturian and their child Arthranick Khatchaturian of 1A Susil Sen road, Bhowpamipore, Calcutta, to visit the United Kingdom, following the death of their close relative in Caernarfon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In accordance with the recent guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit in due course.

European Green Parties (Congress)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if any member of the United

Kingdom embassy staff in Paris was present as an observer at the fifth congress of the European green parties held in Paris between 7 to 9 April.

Mrs. Chalker: No member of the British embassy staff in Paris attended any of the congress sessions, nor was the embassy invited to participate. But one member of staff visited the accompanying exhibition and attended a congress press conference.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present nine meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for May.

The Internal Market Council on 3 May will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the internal market.

The Energy Council will meet on 11 May to consider a Commission paper on transparency of consumer energy prices, an initiative designed as a step towards completing the internal energy market. It will have a first look at THERMIE, a successor programme to the Community's research and development programme for the hydrocarbons sector and its demonstrations scheme, concerning the promotion of energy technology in Europe, and discuss the prospects for an internal market in integrated electrical energy systems. Ministers will attempt to agree a set of recommendations on the Community refining industry left over from the November Council, and also give further consideration to a proposal for improving the efficiency of electricity use. The Council will also discuss Directive 75/404 on the restriction of the use of natural gas in power stations, and complete the agenda by looking at a proposal for a Council directive concerning the procedures for the award of public works contracts in the water, energy and transport sectors.

The Health Council on 16 May will discuss: Europe against cancer programme, tobacco labelling, tar content in cigarettes, smoking in public places and advertising of tobacco products. It will also discuss cardio-vascular diseases, the prevention and control of AIDS, and drugs.

The Development Council meets on 16 May. It is expected to discuss the state of progress on the current negotiations of the Lomé convention. It will also adopt conclusions on: evaluation of development co-operation; how the Community might take account of the role of women in development; and the need to avoid marginalising particular sections of the population when designing aid programmes. The Council is expected to agree conclusions between the Commission and member states in respect of their approaches to the support of structural adjustments in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) signatories of the Lomé convention. It will also discuss the Commission's report on the review of financial and technical co-operation with Latin American and Asian developing countries.

The Culture Council on 18 May will include a discussion on specific actions relating to books: Ministerial resolution and Commission communication. Additionally, discussion is likely to be taken forward on audio-visual matters and in particular on a conference on the subject to be hosted by the French Government in Paris in September 1989. This initiative is aimed at strengthening the European internal market in this field.

The Education Council on 22 May will consider the Commission's proposal for a Community programme to promote the learning of foreign languages (the LINGUA programme) and will review the basis for co-operation in education in the medium term. Discussions are expected also to cover a first response to the Commission's proposal for adaptation of the Erasmus decision and possible new activity relating to educational provision for gipsies and other travelling groups among the population.

The Foreign Affairs Council, meeting on 22-23 May, will discuss progress in the current negotiation of the Lomé convention, and the current state of play on the negotiations for a new international coffee agreement. It will also review progress by the high-level task force set up to resolve the EC-US dispute over hormones in meat. The Council may have a preliminary discussion of a draft mandate for negotiations with the USSR on a trade, commercial and economic co-operation agreement. It may also be asked to approve a mandate for negotiations with the USSR on a textiles agreement. An EC-Israel Co-operation Council will be held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

The Industry Council meets on 29 May. It will consider a draft decision establishing a four-year action programme for small and medium enterprises. It will also discuss: a new proposal for resolving the problems of restructuring the Italian public-sector steel industry; a Commission paper on cross-border industrial collaboration in the Community; proposals for a European mining policy; and the Commission's mid-term review on the 6th directive on shipbuilding aid. There will also be a discussion on the automobile sector including EC-wide arrangements for Japanese imports after 1992, emission standards, the state aid framework for automobiles and local content rules.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 29 and 30 May to discuss plant health, marketing of compound feedingstuffs, pesticide residues, the forestry action programme, and possibly conversion of agricultural production and certain measures in the wine sector.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Malta

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what have been the main items he has discussed with representatives of the Government of Malta since the last general election there; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Since the Nationalist party won the general elections in May 1987, we have discussed a wide range of bilateral and multilateral subjects with the Maltese Government. In the context of our excellent bilateral relations, the discussions have in particular covered the new technical co-operation programme, announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 September 1988, the co-operation agreement, signed when I visited Malta from 14 to 16 March, and the opening of the British Council English Language resource centre, in Valetta, due to take place this autumn.

"Britain's Voice in South Africa"

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many copies of the booklet "Britain's Voice in South Africa" have been printed; at what cost; what will be the main avenues for their distribution; and what are the estimated costs of distribution.

Mrs. Chalker: The total number of copies of the booklet printed or planned is 17,000. The total cost is £21,840. More than 6,000 copies have already been despatched to 145 British diplomatic missions. Further supplies will be sent in response to demand. About 1,000 booklets have been distributed in Britain, including 650 to Members of Parliament. Booklets were distributed to British diplomatic missions with other routine information material. Distribution costs of individual items are not separately identifiable.

Departmental Policy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out *(a)* those areas of policy successes and *(b)* those areas of policy failures within his Department's responsibilities since May 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: For the period to May 1988, I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 6 May 1988 at col. *638* to the question from my late hon. Friend the then Member for Epping Forest (Sir John Biggs-Davison). We have continued successfully to pursue policies aimed at safeguarding Britain's security through membership of NATO, developing Britain's prosperity within the European Community, and strengthening international stability and order through an active bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

South Africa

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain has full diplomatic relations with South Africa.

Iraq

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last had discussions on Iraqi Kurdistan with the authorities of Iraq; and what was the substance of those discussions.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have regularly raised with the Iraqi authorities our concerns over their Kurdish population and human rights violations against the community.

Most recently I did so with the Iraqi ambassador on 19 April, and in particular made clear that we would view with grave concern any evidence of any mass deportations of Kurds. The Iraqi Government have admitted to some localised resettlement of Kurds for security reasons, but have denied mass relocation to the south of the country. We have urged the Iraqi Government to allow diplomats and journalists to visit the areas concerned to see for themselves.

El Salvador

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 25 April to the hon. Member for Oxford, East, *Official Report*, column *463*, if he will now make urgent representations to the El Salvadorean Government concerning the case of Senor Cordova Aguilar.

Mr. Eggar: We have on numerous occasions made very clear to the El Salvadorean authorities the importance that we attach to proper respect for human rights.

We are conveying to the authorities the concern which is felt over the case of Senor Cordova Aguilar's disappearance. We have also been in touch with Tutela Legal, the human rights office of the Catholic Church in El Salvador, who have informed us that there are no clues as to who was responsible for Senor Cordova Aguilar's disappearance in July last year.

EC Commission

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of full-time staff employed at the office of the European Communities Commission in London.

Mrs. Chalker: There are 24 full-time staff.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the reasons for the information office located at the office of the European Communities Commission in London being unable to take telephone inquiries until after 2 pm on each working day.

Mrs. Chalker: This is a matter for the European Commission Office.

Child Slavery

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reveal any plans he has to make known Britain's abhorrence of the child slave trade that is currently operating in a wide variety of countries in the Third world.

Mr. Eggar: Britain has long abhorred the child slave trade and this position is already well-known throughout the world. We shall continue to make clear that we deplore the practice of slavery in all its forms wherever in the world it goes on.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Inquests

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General what is his policy concerning requests for authorisation to make application to the High Court for a fresh inquest into a cause of death; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In each instance in which a request is made to me I consider whether an application to the High Court under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 would have a reasonable prospect of establishing that it is necessary or desirable in the interests of justice for a fresh inquest to be held.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General how many requests he has received in the last year for which figures are available, for him to issue authorisations to make application to the High Court for fresh inquests; and how many of these requests were successful.

The Attorney-General: In the 12-month period ending 31 March 1989, 14 requests were received. Of these requests six were granted, five were refused, two were withdrawn and one is still being considered.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General in what circumstances, when he refuses leave to apply to the High Court for a fresh inquest, he supplies reasons for his decision; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: If I decline to give my authority for an application to the High Court under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 I do so because I consider that the application would have no reasonable prospect of establishing that it is necessary or desirable in the interests of justice for a fresh inquest to be held. In such circumstances it is not my practice to give a more particular reason.

Public Record Office (Files Embargo)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the reasons for the embargo of 75 years that was placed on the following files in the Public Record Office: MH55 reference numbers 1749, 1760 and 1761; and if the Lord Chancellor will now remove the embargo.

The Attorney-General: The first file referred to, MH55/1749, has been closed for 75 years in accordance with the established criteria set out in paragraphs 24 to 27 of the White Paper "Modern Public Records, Cmnd. 8531, March 1982." There are no plans to reduce the file's closure period. MH55/1760 has been open to public inspection since 1986. MH55/1761 is not available for public inspection because its contents are not yet 30 years old .

Courts (Notices)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions during the past 12 months courts in Wales have received complaints that they have been sending out English only notices to Welsh speaking people; and if he will take steps to review the procedures in courts in Wales to ensure that all initial notifications of court proceedings are bilingual and that any subsequent correspondence is either bilingual or in the desired language of the individual concerned.

The Attorney-General: During the last 12 months none of the courts in Wales, for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible, have received any formal complaints that English only notices have been sent out from them. The question of the use of bilingual forms in courts in Wales has been reviewed many times and the Lord Chancellor's Department will continue to keep all procedures under review.

EMPLOYMENT

Speech Therapists

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there are any speech therapists registered as unemployed in Glasgow.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available since there is no analysis of the unemployment count by occupation.

YTS

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in South Yorkshire are in receipt of YTS allowances; and if he has any plans to increase them in line with *(a)* the retail prices index, *(b)* the yearly rate of inflation and *(c)* average earnings.

Mr. Cope: On 31 March 1989, 14,600 young people in South Yorkshire were undertaking training on YTS and in receipt of YTS allowances. A further 3,700 young people in South Yorkshire were employed and undertaking YTS training, but these young people are paid a wage by their employer instead of a trainee allowance. There are no plans to increase the value of the YTS allowance.

Training Agencies

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will call for a report from the training agencies at Merseyside and Manchester on the reasons for the one-day strike by training agency staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Forty nine training agency staff in Merseyside and 36 in Manchester took "industrial action" on 26 April. This constituted a very small minority of training agency staff in these two areas. The action was organised by the Civil and Public Servants Association in protest against the privatisation of the skills training agency, reductions in staffing and the establishment of training and enterprise councils. The action was misguided and the vast majority of training agency staff did not take part.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90;

(2) if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by the Manpower Services Commission and the Training Agency in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will reproduce table 7.29 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 607) using the most recent revised figures available.

Mr. Cope: In respect of table 7.29 of the public expenditure White Paper, figures for the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 remain unchanged. Only the estimated outturn figures for 1988-89 are subject to change at present. However, the final outturn figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. These will be published in the Department's appropriation accounts later this year.

Wages

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take immediate steps to restore the minimum wage levels for young persons aged between 16 and 21.

Mr. Cope: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single Market

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the speech by Mr. Giovanni Falcone of the Sicilian magistrates about the consequences of the single market for the Mafia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Mr. Falcone's remarks were part of a round table discussion on the Mafia and business in Sicily. the meeting was organised by the newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore* which carried an extensive report, including a transcript of the discussion. My Department has a copy of this report. Mr. Falcone said, in the context of the Mafia, that it was important to be aware of the possibilities that might arise for exporting criminal activities once the frontiers were abolished within the single European market. I am reassured, however, to note that Mr. Falcone also says that the Italian authorities are taking strong measures to combat Mafia business activities and that he is optimistic about the growing effectiveness of these measures.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement outlining the changes made recently in defining reciprocity for the purposes of the banking provisions of the single market.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The Commission recently presented revised proposals for a reciprocity provision in the second banking co-ordination directive. As explained by the Commission, the revised proposals would set the Community's maximum negotiating objective as the achievement of effective market access and competitive opportunities for European Community credit institutions in a third country comparable to those accorded by the Community to credit institutions from that third country. The proposals include a procedure for suspension of new authorisations where credit institutions of the Community did not enjoy national treatment, effective market access and the same competitive opportunities as domestic institutions in a third country. The Council of Ministers had an initial discussion on these proposals on 17 April, and they are being considered further.

Right to Buy (Publicans)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to provide for a right to buy for publicans.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer recommended that a new brewers code of practice should be negotiated by the Director General of Fair Trading. This would require the brewers to incorporate a number of provisions into tenancy agreements and leases which contained any form of tie in respect of beer. One such provision would be that before the brewer/landlord disposes of any public house which has a licensee/tenant to a purchaser which is not itself a brewery company the brewer/landlord should give the tenant/licensee a reasonable opportunity of acquiring the premises at market value. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has said he is minded to accept the recommendations of the MMC report.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Maude: I meet the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board as frequently as is necessary.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend and I met the chairman of the Securities and Investments Board on 15 February. The discussion ranged widely over the area of the regulation of financial services.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has had regarding independent financial advisers' responses to the Green Paper from the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Maude: I have received a number of representations regarding the proposals in the Securities and Investments Board's consultation paper "Life Assurance and Unit Trusts Disclosure—the regime for 1990" published last December. Most raise the respective disclosure requirements for tied agents and independent financial advisers.

Self-regulatory Organisations

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the performance of self-regulatory organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: It is for the Securities and Investment's Board to oversee the performance of the self-regulating organisations.

Leisure Circle

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many complaints he has received about the trading practices and selling methods of the Leisure Circle mail order company.

Mr. Forth: I have not received any complaints about this company.

Leisure Circle is a member of the Association of Mail Order Publishers. The Mail Order Publishers' Authority administers the association's code of practice and as such considers and seeks to resolve individual complaints.

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat; if he will give for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein; and if he will express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Forth: The distribution of Department of Trade and Industry's research establishments falls in two regions —Scotland and the south-east. There is one establishment in Scotland and three are in the south-east.

The total number of staff in post at 1 March 1989 (excluding casual staff) was 1,951, of which 30 per cent. were in Scotland and 70 per cent. in the south-east. The research establishments and their staff are:

Area	*Research establishments*	*Number*
Scotland	National Engineering laboratory, East Kilbride	579·0
South-east region	Warren Spring laboratory (now an executive agency), Stevenage, Herts	290·5
	Laboratory of the Government Chemist, Teddington, Middlesex	312·5
	National Physical laboratory (excluding the national measurement accreditation service—NAMAS), Teddington, Middlesex	769·0

Unichem

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will place a copy of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into Unichem in the Library.

Mr. Maude: I will do so as soon as it has been considered by my right hon. and noble Friend and laid before the House.

Tankers (Export Credits)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if export credits have been approved for the tankers to be built at Harland and Wolff, Belfast.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose information about ECGD support for individual cases.

ENERGY

Fawley B Power Station

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the Central Electricity Generating Board has withdrawn its application to build a coal-fired power station at Fawley B, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 28 April 1989, at column 707.

Petrol Prices

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the recent increases of petrol prices for motorists.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have nothing to add to the statement my right hon. Friend made to the House in response to a private notice question from the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) on 20 April, at column 457.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 10 January, *Official Report*, column 577, he will explain the discrepancy between the figures quoted for per capita expenditure on renewable energy of 43p and 20p in Greece and Spain, respectively, with the figures for the same year of 65p and 33p referred to by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in its publication, "Energy Policies and Programmes of International Energy Agency Countries 1986 Review".

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not clear how the hon. Gentleman has arrived at the figures he quotes. The numbers given in my previous reply are valid. They were derived using the following data:

Population of Greece—10 million
Population of Spain—39 million

Expenditure in Greece—$7·6 million
Expenditure in Spain—$14·1 million

And a conversion of £0·56 to $1. The expenditure data were obtained from "Energy Policies and Programmes of IEA countries—1987 Review", table B11.

Coal Industry (Rescue Services)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the experiment that was undertaken by British Coal during the summer of 1988 at Cynheidre, Betws, and Blaenant colleries regarding the speed of rescue services; and if he will publish such results as are available in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation, which is aware of no such experiment. I understand that the corporation undertakes an annual emergency exercise at each of its collieries.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made as to the extent to which the plans by British Coal to reorganise the mines rescue service by downgrading the Loughan rescue station from category A to category B will provide adequate safety cover for coal miners working at both British Coal and mines in private ownership.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation, but I understand that the reclassification was discussed with the mines and quarries inspectorate.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library details of each major

publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Building Regulations

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to publish new building regulations strengthening energy efficiency standards; whether he has received any recent representations from the building industry objecting to such plans; and if he will make a statement on the role that energy conservation measures may play in combating pollution of the earth's atmosphere.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Pollution

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the Government's concern with environmental pollution, it is his intention to provide in building control regulations for the energy efficiency of buildings.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the percentage of motorists using lead-free petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 26 April.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment(1) what would be the approximate amount paid in community charge, expressed as a percentage of disposable income, that would arise for a family of one wage earner, and two other adults over 18 years living in the London borough of Waltham Forest, where the wage earner was *(a)* a senior executive earning over £75,000 with twice the average-value mortgage, *(b)* a ward sister earning over £15,000 with an average-value mortgage and *(c)* a home help earning less than £7,500 with a half-average mortgage; how those percentages would change if the family decided to look after an elderly relative on state pension; and what are the percentages derived from a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), 22 March, *Official Report*, column 626, what would be the approximate amount paid in community charge, expressed as a percentage of disposable income, that would arise for a family of one wage earner, and two other adults over 18 years living in Hornsey, where the wage earner was *(a)* a senior executive earning over £75,000 with twice the average-value mortgage, *(b)* a ward sister earning over £15,000 with an average-value mortgage and *(c)* a home help earning less than £7,500 with a half-average mortgage; how those percentages would change if the family decided to look after an elderly relative on state pension; and what are the percentages derived from a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: This question requires a very large number of assumptions to be made about the personal circumstances of the individuals cited and answers would not be meaningful.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has identified any beneficial effects on electoral registration arising from the poll tax in England.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax.

It is too early to identify beneficial effects on electoral registration arising from the community charge. However, the electoral registration officer for any area in England and Wales may inspect the community charges register of any charging authority which will add to the sources available to help in compiling electoral registers.

Severn-Trent Water (Consent Conditions)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the submissions made by the Severn-Trent water authority to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution which apply for a tightening of current consent conditions;

(2) what named works Severn-Trent water authority have submitted to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for changes to sewage discharge consent conditions;

(3) if he will list the submissions made by the Severn-Trent water authority to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution which apply for a relaxation of current consent conditions and showing which are temporary and which are permanent.

Mr. Howard: I am placing in the Library a list of those sewage works in respect of which the Severn-Trent water authority has applied for revised consents.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what incentives his Department offers to football clubs to go over to all-seater stadiums.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government share the view expressed by the football authorities and others that there should be a move towards all-seater stadiums for the major clubs. The incentive for the clubs would be in improved safety and comfort of their supporters. We welcome Liverpool FC's announcement of its intention to make Anfield an all-seater stadium.

Insulation Industry

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total turnover of the United Kingdom insulation industry in 1968, 1978 and in 1988.

Mr. Trippier: Sales of insulation materials such as expanded vermiculite, mineral wood, mica, mica products, glass fibre, etc. were around £300 million in the United Kingdom in 1988. Comparable figures for 1968 and 1978 are not readily available.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce legislation to ensure that after privatisation the water companies are not permitted to supply water to new customers unless and until *(a)* adequate provision has been made to supply them without detriment to existing customers, *(b)* they have consulted all parties whose interests are likely to be adversely affected by any development connected therewith and *(c)* adequate compensation is paid not only for disturbance to land and amenity but also for the inconvenience caused to such parties.

Mr. Howard: The Water Bill already provides full safeguards for the interests of existing customers and anyone adversely affected by new provision. In particular, undertakers' performance against service indicators and targets will be monitored by the Director General of Water Services. The exercise by undertakers of compulsory powers will be subject to the same constraints as now and in addition the Bill provides for a mandatory code of practice for pipelaying with power for the director general to require an undertaker to compensate an owner or occupier for inconvenience caused by the undertaker acting unreasonably.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to require the water supply companies currently and after privatisation not to withhold their consent unreasonably for the planting of trees and the erection of new buildings within 2·5 metres of a new water main running across private land and to include such a provision in all future wayleaves requiring the landowner to get their written consent in such cases.

Mr. Howard: The powers available to the privatised water companies to lay pipes across private land will be subject to a mandatory code of practice to be submitted by the companies to the Secretary of State for approval. The model code of practice prepared by the Department in consultation with interested parties requires a company to consult the owner or occupier about the route of new pipes. The width of the strip of land above the pipe on which activities are to be restricted will be such as is necessary to protect the pipe and to allow the company access for maintenance. It is the responsibility of the owner or occupier to ensure that his activities do not damage the pipe. Compensation is payable where the value of the land is depreciated as a result of pipelaying.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the London Docklands Development Corporation's expenditure for 1989 to 1990 will be on transport projects.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 14 February at column, *188*.

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will issue guidelines to local planning authorities to minimise the environmental and visual aspects of satellite dishes.

Mr. Chope: Advice about the installation of satellite dishes is included in planning policy guidance note No. 8 "Telecommunications", a copy of which is in the Library. The Department is reviewing the permitted development rights for telecommunications in the light of technological advances since existing rights were set in 1985-86; we intend to issue a consultation paper later this year.

Water Bill

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that the provisions of the Water Bill are consistent with European law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Government have now reached agreement with the European Commission, following detailed discussions, on all the outstanding points arising from the Water Bill. My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside, will shortly table amendments to the Bill which will put beyond doubt that these provisions are fully consistent with European law.

Quite separately, the Commission has recently issued a reasoned opinion to the effect that the United Kingdom does not have legislation in place to give direct effect to the drinking water directive. Regulations incorporating the directive's standards will be made under the Bill and laid before Parliament immediately after Royal Assent. The European Commission has confirmed that such legislation would enable them to close this part of the case.

Rents

Mr Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the average level of registered rents being set for *(a)* a one-bedroom flat, *(b)* a two-bedroom flat and *(c)* a three-bedroom flat or house in the district of Doncaster; for each of the last four years.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of people Doncaster metropolitan borough council is providing with bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and what is the comparable figure five years and 10 years ago.

Mr. Trippier: The number of households temporarily resident in bed and breakfast accommodation as reported by each English local authority at the end of 1978, 1983 and 1988 can be found in the following publications, all of which are available in the Library:

"Homeless households reported by local authorities in England; Statistics for 1978";

"Homeless households reported by local authorities in England; Results for the second half of 1983; Supplementary Tables";

"Local authorites' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the fourth quarter of 1988. Supplementary Tables".

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat; if he will give for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein; and if he will express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Ridley: There is only one research institute operated on behalf of my Department. This is the Building Research Establishment (which incorporates the fire research station). Most of BRE is situated in the south east, but it does have a Scottish laboratory in East Kilbride. On 1 April 1989, 654 staff were employed at BRE.

Community Charge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now provide an estimate of the amount of the community charge in Lambeth on the assumption that expenditure remains at budget levels for 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 25 April to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) at column *532*.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of people who will either pay the community charge or be exempted from it from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Gummer: Latest estimates from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys suggest that there are about 36·5 million adults in England. Around 0·5 million are expected to be exempt from the personal community charge.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will set out in tabular form the level of the community charge for *(a)* Dacorum borough and *(b)* Hertfordshire county if it had been in effect in the financial year 1988-89 and 1989-90 (i) at the level of spending budgeted and (ii) if the local authority concerned had spent at its grant-related expenditure allowance level.

Mr. Gummer: The illustrative figures placed in the Library on 23 June 1988 suggested that if the community charge had been in operation in 1988-89, the charge in Dacorum district would have been £247. The community charge for spending at need would have been £202. Of the excess of £45, £3 was attributable to spending by Dacorum and £42 to spending by Hertfordshire county council.

Illustrative figures for 1989-90 will be published for all areas once data needed from local authorities has been received and analysed.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the latest available figures for the costs of administering the rates in England and Wales, together with his estimate of the comparable costs of the administration of the community charge.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* Our estimate of the cost of collecting and administering the community charge in 1990-91 in England and Wales, based on the Price Waterhouse report, is between £379 million (if all authorities work as efficiently as the most efficient in their category) and £429 million (if authorities maintain their current efficiency). These estimates were at November 1987 prices. The cost of collecting the rates in 1989-90 is estimated to be about £200 million. The Labour party's two-tax system could cost up to four times as much to administer as the existing rating system.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received from *(a)* trades unions representing Government information officers and *(b)* individual officials, concerning the preparation and dissemination of material relating to the community charge.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* In the normal course of business I receive advice from my officials on community charge information material. I am not aware of having received any representations from the trade unions mentioned by the hon. Member.

Mr Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a consolidated list of all sources of legislation and official guidance to the public, local authorities and other interested bodies on the operation of the community charge, giving reference to title, date, authorship, means of availability and other relevant details.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* The following are official sources of information and guidance about the operation of the community charge:

1. *Legislation*

Local Government Finance Act, 1988 (July 1988)
Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 (SI. 1989/438) (March 1989)
Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals Regulations 1989 (SI. 1989/439) (March 1989)
Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations 1989 (SI. 1989/440) (March 1989)
The Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989 (SI. 1989/443) (March 1989)
The Personal Community Chrge (Exemptions) Order 1989 (SI. 1989/442) (March 1989)
The Valuation of Rating (Plant and Machinery) Regulations 1989 (SI. 1989/441) (March 1989)

2. *Community Charge Practice Notes*

The Government, in conjunction with the local authority associations, is publishing a series of community charge practice notes. These provide detailed advice on the operation of the community charge and are circulated to local authority practitioners and others with a professional interest in community charge. The following practice notes have been issued to date;

	Date
An introduction to the Community Charge	May 1988
Exemptions	June 1988
The Register	August 1988
Data Protection	August 1988
Rebates	August 1988
Omission of Names from the Extract	October 1988
Appeals	October 1988
The Canvass	November 1988
Sole or Main Residence	November 1988

	Date
Data Protection No. 2	January 1989
Billing	February 1989
Collection	February 1989
Standard Charge	March 1989
Collective Charge	April 1989
Joint and Several Liability	April 1989

3. *Other Publications*

My Department is producing guidance for the general public on the community charge by means of a free booklet and series of supplementary free leaflets. Publications so far issued in this series are:

	Date
"You and the Community Charge (Your Step by Step Guide)"	December 1988
"You and the Community Charge: Exemptions"	March 1989

Copies of these are available free of charge from Room P1/163, Department of the Environment, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3EB.

Further free leaflets will shortly be available on appeals, the collective community charge, rebates, second homes and students and the community charge. In addition, My right hon. Friend will send a short leaflet on the community charge to every household in England in May.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the proposed fact sheet on community charge and rents inclusive of rates.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Shortly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance his Department has issued to community charge registration officers as to how to register for community charge purposes persons with an itinerant lifestyle as they move between local authority areas;

(2) what guidance his Department has issued to community charge registration officers on the registration of people living on non-stationary houseboats who hold a British waterways licence and have a nominal permanent mooring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Guidance on the registration of individuals in such circumstances is contained in community charge practice note No. 9 entitled "Sole or Main Residence". Copies of all practice notes are in the Library.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make funds available to the tenants' organisations in the Loughborough and Angell estates in Lambeth to provide information about housing action trusts comparable to information provided by him and his Department's consultants.

Mr. Trippier: The information that we have sent tenants' organisations and individual residents explains the proposals for housing action trusts as the first step in local consultations. We have now appointed consultants to discuss with residents ideas for improving the design, condition, management and general living conditions on their estates. I hope that tenants' organisations will play a full part in these discussions.

Water Quality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the extent of Her Majesty's Government's compliance with the signed agreement of the European convention on the standards of the water supply.

Mr. Howard: Public water supplies in the United Kingdom are at present of a very high standard and most supplies already comply with the European Community drinking water directive. We are fully committed to compliance with the European Community directive as soon as practicable. Those supplies which regularly fail to meet a standard are being improved and should comply in the next year or so. Water undertakers are currently submitting to the Department further improvement programmes concerning supplies where there is occasional non-compliance with the directive.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all water supplies in Yorkshire in breach of the European Economic Community directive on water quality in respect of safety limits on lead in drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 23 March 1989 at columns *775-76*.

Local Authorities (Businesses)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Waveney of 19 April, *Official Report* column *229*, he will now make it his policy to hold centrally a list of all local authorities which operate businesses in competition with the private sector and the nature of each business concerned.

Mr. Gummer: No. No useful purpose would be served by such a list. It is for each local authority to decide how to use their statutory powers.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, in respect of each shadow National Rivers Authority region, the sites which contain water sampling and laboratory analysis facilities of a standard necessary to enable the National Rivers Authority to carry out its pollution control functions.

Mr. Howard: When the NRA is established it will own or have access to whatever sampling and analysis facilities are necessary to carry out its full range of pollution control functions. The exact details of its facilities and their location as at the transfer date are not yet finalised, but I refer my hon. Friend to the NRA summary schemes of organisations which were placed in the Library on 2 December for a brief outline of the laboratory arrangements proposed in each region.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Banbury, (Mr. Baldry) *Official Report*, 21 March column *506*, how many reserve sites to Sellafield and Dounreay were listed by Nirex for potential low and intermediate-level nuclear waste disposal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Nirex's report to Government on the deep repository project, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, indicates that, following a detailed site selection procedure, twelve sites were chosen for further appraisal. Nirex decided that, as a first step, further investigations should be limited to two of these locations —Dounreay and Sellafield.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects publication of the report commissioned by his Department from the National Nuclear Corporation concerning the likely environmental impact of the disposal of spent irradiated fuel underground in thick copper cannisters; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has commissioned the National Nuclear Corporation to undertake a study into the packaging, storage and direct disposal of spent oxide fuel. The contract is due to end on 30 November 1989. The Department intends to publish the results of the study as soon as practicable thereafter.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives are being taken by his Department to ensure effective reduction of sulphur dioxide emissions to improve the acidity of surface waters in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have agreed with our European Community partners a phased programme to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide from existing large combustion plants (principally power stations) by 60 per cent. from 1980 levels by 2003, and of nitrogen oxides by 30 per cent. from 1980 levels by 1998. This will add substantially to the programme for reducing acid emissions from power stations which was already in place, estimated to cost over £1 billion.

Pollution Control

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions under the Control of Pollution Act 1978 there have been in West Yorkshire in each of the last five years; and how many have resulted in convictions in the same period.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand from the Yorkshire water authority that the number of prosecutions brought in West Yorkshire for offences under part II of the Act is as follows:

Year	*Prosecutions*[1]
1985	4
1986	8
1987	11
1988	5
[2]1989	2

[1] All these resulted in convictions.
[2] To date.

Prior to 1985, prosecutions for water pollution offences were brought under the Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) Acts 1951 to 1961.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects all companies to be subject to the terms of the Control of Pollution Act;

(2) if he will commission a study into the effects of the river Mersey of the cumulative effects of exempting companies from the Control of Pollution Act;

(3) how many companies in Britain were granted exemptions under the Control of Pollution Act to discharge excess pollutants into Britain's rivers; and if he will list the companies;

(4) how many companies exempted under the Control of Pollution Act discharge effluent into the river Mersey;

(5) what are his reasons for granting exemptions under the Control of Pollution Act to companies;

(6) if he will list the criteria he used to grant exemptions to companies to allow them to discharge excess pollutants into rivers under the Control of Pollution Act;

(7) if he will list the types of effluents and chemicals permitted to be discharged into rivers by companies exempted from the Control of Pollution Act;

(8) if he will list the maximum concentrations of pollutants that can be discharged under exemptions from the Control of Pollution Act; and what is the level for non-exempt companies;

(9) if he will now cease to exempt companies from the terms of the Control of Pollution Act.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* The provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 apply to all companies. Under the phased introduction of part II of the Act, certain categories of discharge which did not require consent under earlier legislation, were exempted from control under the Act. The categories of discharges exempted are set out in The Control of Pollution (Exemption of Certain Discharges from Control) Order 1983 (Statutory Instrument 1983, No. 1182). The order also lists those cases where such exemptions do not apply on account of the requirements of particular EEC directives.

In September 1986, the Government announced their intention to withdraw most of these exemptions. This was effected through The Control of Pollution (Exemption of Certain Discharges from Control) (Variation) Order 1986 (Statutory Instrument 1986, No. 1623). This order lists the remaining categories of exempted discharges and sets out transitional provisions for previously exempted discharges. Water authorities have been advised that they should aim to replace all deemed consents issued under the transitional provisions with individually determined consents by October 1992.

The question whether an industrial discharge is still eligible for an exemption in accordance with the order, is currently a matter for the relevant water authority. However, all discharges of trade and sewage effluent into coastal and estuarial waters—such as the Mersey—have now been brought within the scope of controls.

The few remaining minor categories of discharges to which exemptions still apply are, by their nature, not considered to pose any significant pollution threat to the environment. However, under the terms of the Water Bill, discharges within these categories will be subject to a relevant prohibition procedure, which will allow the National Rivers Authority to give notice at any time that a discharge within these categories may be made only subject to their consent, and the conditions they will impose.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will obtain and place in the Library a detailed hydrological analysis of the water in the river

Mersey, detailing the levels of *(a)* hydrocarbon effluents, *(b)* biological effluents, *(c)* inorganic chemical pollutants and *(d)* heavy metals.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* The monitoring of water quality in the Mersey and of discharges of effluent into the river is the responsibility of the North West water authority. Data from the authority's monitoring operations are available for inspection on the public register maintained by the authority.

Further monitoring of these and other substances in the Mersey and other United Kingdom waters will be carried out as a consequence of actions agreed at the second North sea conference designed to achieve by 1995 substantial reductions of inputs of the most dangerous substances via rivers and estuaries. In the United Kingdom action is focused in particular on red list substances, details of which were announced by my noble Friend, the Minister for the Environment on 10 April, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column *121*. Implementation of the North sea conference declaration will be applied to all United Kingdom waters, not just those flowing into the North sea.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the maximum discharges of *(a)* benzene and *(b)* toluene permitted into rivers under the Control of Pollution Act.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, any person wishing to discharge these substances to water must first obtain consent to do so from the appropriate water authority. There are no general limits set for these particular substances. Individual discharge consents are normally subject to conditions which specify the type and quantities of substances which may be discharged. These conditions are set by the consenting authority with regard to achieving the quality objectives set for the receiving waters, including current and potential uses of those waters. Maximum discharges therefore depend upon the circumstances of the particular case.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has at any time granted deemed consent to the Granox factory in Widnes to discharge excess pollution into the Mersey.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* I understand that the company has deemed consent from the North West water authority to discharge trade effluent into the Mersey. Details about the discharge are entered on the public register maintained by the water authority.

I understand that the water authority is shortly to replace the deemed consent with a positively determined consent. Details of this consent, including the conditions to which it is subject, will also be entered on the public register.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the petition sent to him by non-industrial staff of the Crown Suppliers and the letter from the Property Services Agency trade union side to which the petition refers.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* No, but my right hon. Friend yesterday met the unions representing the staff of the Crown Supplier.

Clay Cross Treatment Works

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East of 17 April, *Official Report*, column *34*, if he will give details of the application for a time limited consent variation for the Clay Cross treatment works.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* Details of applications made under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, including those for time limited variations, are held on the individual water authorities' registers. These may be inspected, free of charge, by anyone at all reasonable hours. It is not practicable to provide centrally the details of individual applications.

Rates

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the five highest rate rises for district councils in England and Wales were in the period 1981-82 to 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

District Councils in England and Wales with highest local rate poundage increases in the period 1981-82 to 1988-89

	(p)
Calderdale	173
Bradford	159
North Tyneside	157
Knowsley	153
Kirklees	152

Bradford (Development)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any application by Bradford council to vary the south Bradford plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* Bradford city council has recently published statutory notice of its intention to adopt the South-East Bradford local plan. The council is not required to apply to the Secretary of State to vary the local plan. It is however required to inform the Secretary of State of its disposition to adopt the plan and has done so.

Water Authorities (EC Funding)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the conditions under which European regional development funding is currently awarded for water authority schemes.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The conditions under which European regional development funds are awarded to water authority schemes are laid down in Council Regulations (EEC) 2052/88, 4253/88 and 4254/88. These appear in Official Journals L1859, L374 Vol. 31 and L374/15 respectively. Copies are available from the Library.

Hythe Marina

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 10 April to the hon.

Member for Copeland, *Official Report*, column 402, when he proposes writing to the parties about the Hythe, Kent, marina.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Shortly.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what departmental representation is planned, and what papers will be presented by departmental officials, at the conference on radioactive waste management to be held by the British Nuclear Energy Society in Britain on 2 May.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* I have been invited officially to open the British Nuclear Energy Society's conference on 3 May. On the same day, Dr. F. S. Feates, chief inspector Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, will be delivering a paper on the United Kingdom's policy and strategy on radioactive waste management.

Tributyl-tin

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what national and international action is being taken by his Department to dissuade the owners of ships at present exempt from the ban on the use of tributyl-tin from using paints which contain this substance; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom has reported the measures taken to date by the Government to the Commission of the European Communities, and a range of international organisations, the most relevant of which include the International Maritime Organisation and the Paris Commission. The CEC has reacted by proposing a directive which is closely modelled on the United Kingdom regulations. The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities has recently published its opinion (HL Paper 23, February 1988) on the antifouling paint provisions in the draft directive (the 8th amendment to the marketing and use directive (76/769/EEC)). The Government are considering their response to the Committee's report.

WALES

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current pupil-teacher ratios for each of the education authorities in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The overall pupil-teacher ratios in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools as at January 1988 are as follows:

	Ratio
Clwyd	18·2
Dyfed	16·7
Gwent	17·4
Gwynedd	16·0
Mid Glamorgan	17·0
Powys	15·1
South Glamorgan	17·9
West Glamorgan	16·6

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Jackson's bay, Barry, *(b)* Whitmore bay, Barry and *(c)* Cold Knapp, Barry of (i) a long sea outfall and (ii) full sewage treatment works to enable them to comply with EEC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC.

Mr. Grist: The authority is currently reviewing its programme of remedial works which aims to achieve compliance of all listed waters. The full cost of the programme has yet to be evaluated.

Drinking Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the information his Department holds concerning time-limited derogations and delays which have been granted on the non-compliance of potable waters in Wales with the European directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption (80/77/EEC).

Mr. Grist: The information held by the Department is as follows. I will arrange to place a copy in the Library of the House.

17 = Aluminium
1 = Colour; 6 = pH unit; 33 = Iron;
34 = Manganese

Source	*Derogated Parameter*	*Delayed Parameter*
Pontsticill	—	17
Nantyowch	34	17, 33
Garw Levels	33	33
Preseli	—	33
Strata Florida	34	17
Ystradfelltre	34	—
Lovesgrove Borehole	34	—
Nantymoel	34	—
Ffynnon Rhys	—	33
Wern Ddu	6	—
Llandeilo Graban	—	17
Afon Cwm-y-Llan	17	—
Penygoyallt	6	—
Llanfynydd	6, 34	33
Georgetown	6, 34	17, 33
Alwen	1, 34	17, 33
Cynwyd	34	17, 33
Cwmsymlog	17	—
Bettws-y-Coed	34	17
Garreglwyd	33, 34	—
Bryn Goch	33	—
Maenllwyd	—	33
Nantmor	17, 34	—
Rhyd-Ddu	34	—
Talwaenydd	—	33
Carno	34	17, 33
Talybont	—	33
Portis	34	17, 33
Penyfan	33	—
Upper Wenallt Springs	33	—
Cwm Cegr Springs	33	—
Llanbedr Springs	33	—
Llanwrtyd Wells	—	17, 33
Barmouth Junction	—	33
Capel Dewi	—	17
Bolton Hill	—	33
Caerau	34	—
Llan Penmachno	17, 34	—
Crai Reservoir	34	—
Croesor	34	—
Rhyd	17, 33, 34	—
Rhydyronnen	33	—

Source	17 = Aluminium 1 = Colour; 6 = pH unit; 33 = Iron; 34 = Manganese Derogated Parameter	Delayed Parameter
Tir-Cawen	33	—
Meifod	—	17

In addition, a general delay exists in respect of lead in drinking water to December 1989.

The temporary relaxation of the standards of the drinking water directive does not pose any threat to public health.

Consultants

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by each health district the number of consultants in each specialty who have merit awards; and what this figure represents as a percentage of the total number of consultant posts.

Mr. Grist: The following information is given on an all-Wales basis rather than by health districts in order to preserve the confidential nature of the awards.

Wales

Specialty	Number
Anaesthetics	34
Cardiology	3
Cardio-Thoracic surgery	2
Community medicine	13
Dermatology	4
Diseases of the chest	2
Ear, nose and throat	10
General medicine	38
General surgery	28
Genito urinary medicine	1
Geriatric medicine	6
Mental illness/Mental handicap	30
Neurology	5
Neurosurgery	5
Obstetrics and gynaecology	17
Ophthalmology	6
Orthopaedic surgery	15
Paediatrics	14
Paediatric surgery	2
Chemical pathology	2
Haematology/Blood transfusion	8
Histopathology	11
Medical microbiology	4
Plastic surgery	4
Radiology	16
Radiotherapy	4
Rheumatology and rehabilitation	3
Oral surgery	5
Orthodontics	3
Restorative dentistry	4

The number of award holders represents some 35 per cent. of the total number of consultants in Wales.

DEFENCE

Ex-Civil Servants (Defence Sector)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants have joined the private defence sector following retirement from his Department over the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information is not available.

Arms Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of policy implementation by his Department in regard to arms control that have failed since May 1979; and what steps he intends to take to rectify the failures.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No areas of the Government's policy on arms control have failed since May 1979.

War Dead (Visits)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance and travel information is given to the immediate relatives of the war dead in arranging and meeting the costs of visits to countries in Europe; and if he will list the information he has on the comparable policies of the French, West German and Italian Governments.

Mr. Neubert: Where the funeral of a service man or woman who dies overseas is held locally at public expense, two visitors, normally the next of kin, from the United Kingdom or Eire are entitled to attend the funeral with both travel and accommodation costs being met by my Department. If local conditions prevent such a visit from being made, a visit to the grave may be permitted up to two years after the funeral.

The widows of war dead who died prior to 1967 may make visits to graves overseas, whether in Europe or elsewhere, under the Government war widows grant-in-aid scheme, which allows widows to join pilgrimages arranged by the Royal British Legion at one-eighth of the cost for their first visit. Thereafter, the charge represents the cost to the legion.

Information is not currently available on any comparable policies of the French, West German and Italian Governments.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when, under normal circumstances, a nuclear submarine discharges radioactive materials into the sea, how the Royal Navy takes the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection regarding dose into account when determining what levels are acceptable; and if the International Commission on Radiological Protection recommendations are used to determine acceptable levels of radiation for the safety of crew.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 March 1989, at column 477, under normal circumstances Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines do not discharge radioactivity directly to the sea. When such discharges are made, however, the radioactivity level of the coolant water is measured and the water is discharged through a treatment plant which further reduces its radioactivity. Levels of radioactive discharges at sea are lower than agreed discharge limits for land-based installations, and it is inconceivable that they could result in a radiation dose to any individual approaching the limits recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

The International Commission on Radiological Protection recommendations concerning radiation doses

to workers are embodied within the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985, and are applied on board Her Majesty's submarines.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if nuclear submarine personnel receiving radiation doses in the higher ranges above 15 mSv p. a. are generally those classified as radiation workers; and if those same radiation workers receive doses in those high ranges in consecutive years;

(2) whether the numbers of nuclear submarine personnel receiving radiation doses in various ranges provided on 20 March, *Official Report*, columns *477-78*, include all nuclear submarine personnel; and how the doses for those personnel not designated as radiation workers, and so not subject to dosimetric assessment, are determined.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures to which the hon. Member refers include only those submarine personnel classified as radiation workers. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 March, at column 476, Royal Navy nuclear submarine personnel are shielded from much natural radiation and the radiation doses they receive are for the most part lower than those received by members of the public. The majority of nuclear submarine personnel are not categorised as radiation workers, and there is no requirement to maintain radiation dose records for them. However, regular radiation surveys are carried out on board nuclear-powered submarines to ensure that these personnel do not receive any significant radiation doses.

During the last 10 years, 64 nuclear submarine personnel have received doses of 15 mSv or over in two or more consecutive years. No individual has received more than four separate annual doses of 15 mSv or over during this period.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of numbers of nuclear submarine personnel by radiation dose received, cumulative doses and average individual doses, for the years from commencement of the nuclear submarine programme to 1983 inclusive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Figures for before 1979 are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The figures for 1979 to 1983 are as follows:

Year	*Cumulative dose (man Sieverts)*	*Number of personnel in dose ranges*						*Average individual dose (mSv)*
		0-15 mSv	*15-20 mSv*	*20-30 mSv*	*30-40 mSv*	*40-50 mSv*	*Over 50 mSv*	
1983	2·9	814	27	15	3	0	0	3·35
1982	2·1	994	11	8	1	0	0	2·08
1981	3·1	1,226	13	5	2	0	0	2·31
1980	6·6	2,473	31	8	2	0	1	2·63
1979	7·7	2,362	33	23	10	1	0	3·23

Note: mSv = millisievert.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent medical surveys his Department has undertaken amongst past and present submarine service personnel or their offspring to determine whether there has been any abnormal statistical evidence of medical disorders arising from exposure of Royal Navy nuclear submarine personnel to radiation; and if he will publish the dates and the population census for such surveys.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An epidemiological research programme into morbidity and mortality among submariners is currently being carried out by Medical Research Council. The study was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and arranged through the Royal Naval Personnel Research Committee, through which the Royal Navy has regular contact with civil medical experts. The data for the survey were produced from service records.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the deterrent value of *(a)* a short-range nuclear weapon and *(b)* a strategic nuclear weapon.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To support its strategy of deterrence, NATO requires diversified, survivable and operationally-flexible nuclear forces across the entire spectrum of ranges.

Mr. Samuel Quinn

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what capacity Samuel Quinn, at present in police custody in Paris, is a serving member of the Territorial Army; which territorial army unit he belongs to; what is his rank and his years of membership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our general policy, for reasons of personal security, to confirm whether a person is serving in Northern Ireland either with the security forces or in the Territorial Army. However, details of Samuel Quinn's service have been widely reported and are as follows:

Samuel Quinn is a warrant officer class 2 and is a troop sergeant major employed on general administrative and training duties in 102 Air Defence Regiment (Volunteer). He has served in the Territorial Army since 1974.

The circumstances of his arrest are being investigated by the police and it would be inappropriate to comment further.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the Northern Ireland Civil Service at 13 April 1989 the representation of females was as follows:

	Numbers	*Percentage*
Grade 1	—	—
Grade 2	—	—
Grade 3	1	2·7
Grade 4	—	—
Grade 5	12	6·9
Grade 6	37	15·0
Grade 7	53	6·6
All grades	11,597	49·9

The Northern Ireland Civil Service does not monitor the ethnic origins of its staff.

Of the 176 Home civil servants serving in the Northern Ireland Office in London and Belfast, 88 (50 per cent.) are women and 16 (9 per cent.) from ethnic minority groups (of these there is only one officer at grade 7 level). In London 51 per cent. of the NIO's staff are women and 13 per cent. come from ethnic minority groups.

Tullygarley, Larne (Redevelopment)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland Housing Executive proposes to proceed with its redevelopment plans for the Tullygarley area of Larne, County Antrim.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I have been advised by the chief executive that construction of the first phase of 15 dwellings is programmed to commence in July 1990.

Carrickfergus (Redevelopment)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the earliest possible date on which an announcement can be expected of the start date for redevelopment and housing action in central Carrickfergus.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I have been advised by the chief executive that an examination of housing strategy for central Carrickfergus, which includes the use of investment appraisal techniques, is expected to be completed by the end of 1989. The executive will then determine what proposals it should submit to the Department of Environment (NI) for approval.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has for the Carrickfergus central area.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I have been advised by the chief executive that three proposed redevelopment areas have been declared and a potential housing action area is being considered. The Housing Executive expects to be in a position by the end of 1989 to reach conclusions on specific proposals to be submitted to the Department of Environment (NI) for approval.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when owner occupiers and residents will be informed of decisions by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on future housing development of central Carrickfergus.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I have been advised by the chief executive that residents will be informed if and when a vesting order application is made to the Department of Environment (NI) or a housing action area declared.

Housing (Maintenance)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary for State of Northern Ireland what was the average delay between time of receipt of notification of a category three maintenance complaint by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the completion of the repair in each Housing Executive district in each of the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the chief executive has advised me that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pensioners

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northen Ireland (1) how many pensioners have had additional allowance for heating, diet and so on, wiped out since pensions were increased and did not benefit financially by the most recent increase;

(2) how many pensioners *(a)* no longer qualify for housing benefit and *(b)* have had housing benefit reduced since the most recent pension increase.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Rates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average rate of increase in the district rate for 1989-90.

Mr. Needham: 1·49p in the pound, which represents an increase of 2·4 per cent.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the extent of consultations with local authorities before he confirmed the level of regional rates for 1989-90.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) on 20 April, at column 448. The regional rate is levied as a contribution from ratepayers to those rateborne services which in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of central Government, not local authorities. Expenditure on those services to which they contribute is determined each year as part of the public expenditure planning process and is subject to the scrutiny of Parliament. As the level of the regional rate is a central Government responsibility, there is no provision in the process for prior consultation with local authorities.

Mater Hospital, Belfast

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether staff at the Mater hospital are required to agree to work within Roman Catholic medical ethics.

Mr. Needham: Staff at the Mater hospital are employed on the same terms and conditions of service as other

similar grades of staff in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. However, some senior medical staff employed at the hospital have an additional clause in their contract which requires them to have regard to the need to maintain the character and associations of the hospital which are such as to link it with the Roman Catholic faith.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all current publicity campaigns being conducted by or for his Department or one planned for the first three months of 1989-90, indicating those which involve television advertising and the starting and finishing dates of each campaign.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 19 April 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Direct Debit awareness

11 advertisements ran from 27 March until early April and included television advertising.

Road Safety Campaign

Continuing in newspapers only.

Youth Training Programme

Television from 15 May-2 June. Radio from 15-21 May and 29 May-2 June. Supported by press and outdoor posters.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Television 3-23 April. Press advertisements on 13 and 16 April with further press advertisements planned for May and June.

Ulster Savings Committee

Continuing campaign throughout the year, no television advertising.

Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission

Five career talks, eight career conventions, and press advertisements to promote the Northern Ireland Civil Service. No television advertising.

Confidential Telephone

Continuing campaign for offering information to the security forces, involves a limited amount of television advertising.

Loans (Recovery)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available on the amounts of money recovered to date in respect of budgeting loans or crisis loans, by social security office and by premium.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information about the amounts of money recovered for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows. Information about the amounts recovered by premium is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Budgeting and crisis loan recovering 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989

Social security office	Amount £
Andersonstown	310,287·18
Antrim	138,151·64
Armagh	90,170·00
Ballymena	130,697·32
Ballymoney	83,855·55
Ballynahinch	12,142·99
Banbridge	48,621·24
Bangor	62,632·25
Carrickfergus	66,741·15
Coleraine	138,359·05
Cookstown	87,151·99
Corporation Street	293,354·23
Downpatrick	64,412·81
Dungannon	128,599·41
Enniskillen	98,319·58
Falls	284,793·85
Holywood Road	167,158·84
Kilkeel	15,155·75
Knockbreda	103,472·26
Larne	68,863·40
Limavady	64,474·52
Lisburn	210,938·49
Londonderry	357,795·15
Lurgan	160,122·26
Magherafelt	81,438·76
Newcastle	26,139·12
Newry	147,094·52
Newtownabbey	113,804·24
Newtownards	66,456·06
Omagh	136,444·36
Portadown	81,972·64
Shaftesbury Square	166,087·30
Shankill	140,989·13
Strabane	148,694·34

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available on the number of social fund applications in each social security office in the year April 1988-89 which were made by claimants in receipt of family credit or housing benefit but not income support, and the number of payments, and their total value, made to such claimants.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information about the number of applications is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Housing benefit is not a qualifying benefit for maternity payments. Information about the number of payments and the amounts awarded is as follows:

Social fund awards for funeral and maternity payments: 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989

Social security office	Funeral payments				Maternity payment	
	Awards	Family credit £	Awards	Housing benefit £	Awards	Family credit £
Andersonstown	—	—	6	3,270·50	20	1,700·00
Antrim	2	1,174·00	4	1,887·27	23	1,955·00
Armagh	8	3,879·80	7	3,713·60	29	2,465·00
Ballymena	2	1,043·00	7	3,057·90	17	2,465·00
Ballymoney	1	416·00	16	5,699·40	19	1,615·00
Ballynahinch	1	477·55	—	—	4	340·00
Banbridge	8	4,096·68	3	1,347·00	17	1,445·00
Bangor	1	692·05	5	2,489·05	12	1,020·00
Carrickfergus	—	—	8	2,856·14	12	1,020·00

Social security office	Funeral payments		Housing benefit	Maternity payment	
	Awards	Family credit £	Awards	£	Awards	Family credit £
Coleraine	—	—	9	4,511·07	28	2,370·00
Cookstown	2	645·70	3	1,721·50	32	2,720·00
Corporation Street	—	—	18	9,823·43	14	1,190·00
Downpatrick	2	698·00	5	1,569·80	22	1,870·00
Dungannon	7	3,863·00	3	1,400·00	35	3,145·00
Enniskillen	9	4,155·80	10	4,465·22	46	3,190·00
Falls	—	—	7	4,298·62	5	425·00
Holywood Road	5	2,261·99	12	5,649·51	19	1,615·00
Kilkeel	1	456·80	2	688·25	10	850·00
Knockbreda	—	—	13	7,862·23	10	850·00
Larne	1	156·42	8	4,460·65	9	765·00
Limavady	3	780·80	5	1,796·30	17	1,445·00
Lisburn	1	339·00	14	8,083·60	19	1,615·00
Londonderry	7	2,471·05	30	15,280·79	62	5,265·00
Lurgan	—	—	13	7,565·32	20	1,700·00
Magherafelt	6	2,780·00	1	471·00	37	3,145·00
Newcastle	—	—	3	1,004·65	13	1,105·00
Newry	2	948·85	20	9,350·00	56	4,760·00
Newtownabbey	—	—	5	2,466·56	6	510·00
Newtownhards	1	574·50	8	3,178·12	18	1,530·00
Omagh	6	3,369·30	6	2,962·00	45	4,165·00
Portadown	1	667·80	10	5,747·95	13	1,105·00
Shaftsbury Square	—	—	11	5,542·96	11	935·00
Shankill	—	—	4	1,550·29	6	510·00
Strabane	6	2,848·50	12	5,953·70	27	2,295·00

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available for the year April 1988-89 on the numbers and types of social fund applications from and payments, indicating the value of such payments, to claimants in receipt of income support who were in receipt of the respective income support premiums by social security office.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent to which his policies of *(a)* targeting and *(b)* making the social security system easier to understand have been fulfilled in the first year of full operation of the social fund; and what assessment he has made of the efficiency in management of the fund by social security offices.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The Department of Health and Social Services is monitoring closely the operation of the social fund and has commissioned independent research. However, it is too soon to come to conclusions about the extent to which policies are meeting their objectives. The Department's monitoring indicates that the management of the social fund by social security offices is generally satisfactory.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the 1989-90 social fund budget; how many people are on income support; and how many are in receipt of the respective income support premiums for each social security office.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions about the 1989-90 social fund budget by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) on 23 March 1989, at columns *739-42.*

At 28 February, the latest date for which information is available, there were 185,706 income support recipients in the Province. Information on the numbers of claimants receiving each of the income support premiums by social security office is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision has been made in respect of social fund I to take account of the local numbers in receipt of family credit or housing benefit, but not income support, who might make social fund I applications.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* None. Maternity and funeral payments made under phase 1 of the social fund are regulated payments paid as an entitlement and are not affected by local social security office budgets.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of appeals regarding social fund I which have been made in each social security office in each year of its operation to date and indicating the number of these which were successful.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* Information about the number of appeals for the period 6 April 1987 to 10 April 1988 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, (the latest date for which information is available), is as follows:

Social Fund phase I (maternity and funeral expenses)
Number of appeals received 11 April 1988—31 March 1989

Social security office	Number of appeals received	Number revised	Pending
Andersonstown	2	—	2
Antrim	2	2	—
Armagh	—	—	—
Ballymena	4	2	—
Ballymoney	—	—	—
Ballynahinch	—	—	—
Banbridge	1	1	—
Bangor	—	—	—

Social security office	Number of appeals received	Number revised	Pending
Carrickfergus	—	—	—
Coleraine	5	3	—
Cookstown	3	2	—
Corporation Street	2	—	1
Downpatrick	—	—	—
Dungannon	—	—	—
Enniskillen	4	3	1
Falls	8	8	—
Holywood Road	—	—	—
Kilkeel	—	—	—
Knockbreda	2	1	—
Larne	—	—	—
Limavady	—	—	—
Lisburn	3	3	—
Londonderry	12	10	2
Lurgan	1	—	—
Magherafelt	1	—	1
Newcastle	2	2	—
Newry	6	5	—
Newtownabbey	—	—	—
Newtownards	—	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—
Portadown	2	—	—
Shaftesbury Square	—	—	—
Shankill	2	—	—
Strabane	—	—	—

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the numbers of reviews sought by claimants in respect of social fund II decisions, the number of cases where the decision changed on review, the numbers which had a second review and the numbers where the decision changed on second review by social security office.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The information for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, the latest date for which information is available, is given in the table. Some review applications were withdrawn following receipt and some are currently being considered.

Number of applications for first review by social security offices: 11 April 1988—31 March 1989

	Received	Revised
Community Care Grants	1,932	663
Budgeting Loans	5,740	1,838
Crisis Loans	526	230
Total	8,198	2,731

Information about the number and outcome of applications for a second review by social security offices is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Consultants

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hospital consultants held *(a)* full-time contracts and *(b)* part-time contracts with the National Health Service in Northern Ireland in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1988.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* The information is as follows:

	Full-time	Part-time (including maximum p-t)	Joint appointments between University and Health Service
1979	315	133	61
1988	422	99	74

Cervical Screening

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all boards which operate a computerised call/recall cervical cytology programme for all women aged 20 to 65 years at three-yearly intervals.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* A central computerised programme has been developed for the whole of Northern Ireland to call women aged 20-65 for cervical screening at five-yearly intervals. The system started operating in the Eastern board last autumn, is being introduced this month in the Western board and is due to commence in the Northern and Southern boards later this year.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those boards which have not yet called all women aged 20 to 65 years for a cervical cancer smear.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* As the cervical screening programme is designed to call women at five-yearly intervals, all women in the 20 to 65 age group will not have been called until five years after the introduction of the computerised call system.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the uptake of women called for a cervical cancer smear for each board; and if he will list those boards which are unable to provide these statistics.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Uptake figures for women screened under the computerised call and recall system are not yet available.

Community Care

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what account is taken of factors including the location of hostels, hospitals or other residential accommodation facilities and local board plans in respect of community care which might have a bearing on demand for community care grants in given social security offices.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* No account was taken of these factors in determining the size of community care grant budgets for social security offices for 1989-90. However, when setting the priorities and profiles for their office budgets, social security office managers consider local factors which may influence the numbers and types of applicants in their office areas.

Noel Little

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what period Noel Little, at present in police custody in Paris, was a serving member of the Ulster Defence Regiment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

It is not our general policy, for reasons of personal security, to confirm whether a person has served in Northern Ireland in the Ulster Defence Regiment. However, details of Noel Little's service have been widely reported and are as follows:

Noel Little served as a part-time private in the Ulster Defence Regiment between June 1980 and June 1986, when he was discharged on completion of his engagement.

The circumstances of his arrest are being investigated by the police, and it would be inappropriate to comment further.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

"The School Effect"

12. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he intends to take in the light of the Policy Studies Institute report "The School Effect."

Mr. Butcher: This important report includes evidence of marked variations between secondary schools in the level of achievement of pupils of similar abilities. It reinforces the Government's determination to proceed with the implementation of the national curriculum and with the arrangements for assessment and testing.

Qualified Teachers

13. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to encourage those qualified teachers who no longer teach in state schools to return to teaching.

Mrs. Rumbold: Former teachers returning to teaching already make up over half of all new teaching appointments each year. The Department and the teaching as a career unit have been discussing with all LEAs ways in which they can maximise teacher recruitment from this source.

National Curriculum (Teacher Shortages)

14. **Miss Joan Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to monitor the effect of teacher shortages on the implementation of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department already collects data annually on vacant teacher posts and we shall continue to do so. Information regulations to be made under section 22 of the Education Reform Act will enable us to obtain annual information on the curriculum offered in schools and on teacher deployment.

Opting Out

16. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about progress under the opting out provisions of the Education Act 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To date, I have approved proposals from eight schools to become grant-maintained from September of this year. I have rejected a proposal from one school. Parents at a further 30 schools have voted in favour of seeking grant-maintained status.

Class Sizes

17. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to reduce the number of children in state schools taught in classes of 30 or more.

29. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to reduce the number of children in state schools taught in classes of 30 or more.

37. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to reduce the number of children in state schools taught in classes of 30 or more.

Mr. Butcher: Over the last 10 years the proportion of pupils taught in classes of 31 or more has fallen by nearly 12 percentage points in primary schools to 23·5 per cent., and by nearly 9 percentage points in secondary schools to 7 per cent. There are more teachers relative to pupils now than ever before. It is for LEAs and schools to decide how to deploy them.

Nursery School Provision

18. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made since 1979 in extending nursery school provision.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total number of under fives in maintained schools increased from 428,000 in 1979 to 533,000 in 1988. In nursery schools and classes alone the numbers increased from 210,000 to 285,000. The age participation rate went up from 38 per cent. to 45 per cent.

Freedom of Speech

19. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to introduce further legislation to ensure that freedom of speech is protected in Britain's institutes of further and higher education.

Mr. Jackson: We are reviewing section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 and it is too early to say whether further legislation is needed.

Secondary School Teachers

20. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of secondary teachers are *(a)* graduates without a postgraduate teachers certificate and *(b)* instructors.

Mr. Butcher: Graduates without initial teacher training in the United Kingdom were 7 per cent. of all full-time qualified teachers in maintained secondary schools in England in March 1986.

Instructors and student teachers represented 0·8 per cent. of the total full-time equivalent of all teachers and instructors in these schools in January 1988.

Rutherford Laboratory

21. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the scientific staff at the Rutherford laboratory pay income tax at a rate above the standard rate.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available. Tax returns are a matter for the individual concerned.

Schools (Business Links)

22. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to encourage more secondary schools to develop effective links with businesses.

Mr. Butcher: The Department is keen to encourage links between schools and the business community, and is involved with others in a range of initiatives designed to achieve this. A directory of school/industry links organisations and two booklets on "Education at Work" are published by the Department, and funding for teacher training in this area is made available to local education authorities through the LEA training grants scheme. Particular projects and organisations are also selectively funded.

Attainment Level

23. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the level of attainment by children from inner-urban areas.

Mr. Butcher: The range of measures introduced in the Education Reform Act will raise standards across the country, and their good effect will be most apparent where the problems are worst. Our new city technology colleges will raise standards significantly by example, and give parents and pupils a new choice of school.

Nuclear Fusion

24. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of the research work carried out by Professor Martin Fleischmann of Southampton university into the achievement of nuclear fusion at room temperatures, he will invite the Advisory Board for the Research Council to reconsider the nature and scale of United Kingdom research into nuclear fusion.

Mr. Jackson: In February 1989, the Science and Engineering Research Council decided to establish a panel to advise on future support of plasma physics and nuclear fusion.

This panel will be able to assess the prospects for research into "cold fusion" and make appropriate recommendations, through the Science and Engineering Research Council, to the Advisory Board for the Research Council about any change in the level of support for work in this area.

31. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research programmes he is supporting specifically on cold fusion.

Mr. Jackson: The Science and Engineering Research Council is supporting work on muon-catalysed fusion carried out on the ISIS facility of the council's Rutherford Appleton laboratory. It is a collaborative programme with the University of Birmingham, the Culham laboratory of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), and groups in Italy, the Netherlands and the United States.

The council also supports groups in British universities and in its own establishments, which are participating in attempts to replicate the recently-claimed cold fusion in electrochemical cells. Contact is also being maintained with similar work at the Harwell laboratory of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Student Loans

25. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to introduce top-up loans for students.

41. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to introduce top-up loans for students.

Mr. Jackson: We are discussing the arrangements for the loans scheme with the financial institutions: those discussions are making useful progress.

City Technology College (South Yorkshire)

26. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from potential sponsors regarding the setting up of a city technology college in South Yorkshire.

Mr. Butcher South Yorkshire is one of the target areas for a city technology college, but we have at the present time no proposals from sponsors.

Teacher Shortages

27. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to obtain an accurate account of teacher shortages in secondary education.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) on 26 April 1989 at column *553*.

33. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the shortages of maths and science teachers.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 26 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) at column *554*.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to obtain an accurate account of teacher shortages in nursery education.

34. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to obtain an accurate account of teacher shortages in nursery education.

Mr. Butcher: The Department instituted the collection of data on vacant posts in nursery and primary schools for the first time in January 1988. We also conducted a primary school staffing survey in 1987 which provides extensive information about teachers in nursery and primary schools.

35. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to solve the problems of teacher shortages in Surrey.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's action programme on teacher shortages has, over the last three years, been aimed at securing new recruits to teaching in the shortage subjects and at providing in-service training for existing but under-qualified teachers of these subjects. Action has, in particular, been focused on those parts of the country, including Surrey, where shortages have hit hardest. We plan to build on and extend that programme as necessary to secure the teachers that we need for our schools.

Teacher Retention

28. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to discourage existing teachers from leaving the profession.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr Evans) on 24 April at *columns 416-17*.

Open University

30. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the vice-chancellor of the open university; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend visited the open university on 4 November 1987 and discussed a wide range of issues concerning the work of the university with the vice-chancellor and other senior staff. He is advised on all matters relating to the open university by an independent visiting committee which last met the vice-chancellor on 13-14 April.

Clinical Medical Research

32. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on responsibility for the funding of clinical medical research under the proposed reforms of the National Health Service.

36. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he has had with the Medical Research Council on the funding of clinical research under the proposed reforms to the National Health Service.

Mr. Jackson: The White Paper "Working for Patients" made clear that the Government are firmly committed to maintaining the quality of medical research. We recognise the complexity and special needs of this area, and my right hon. Friend is in close touch with my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Health, who is developing proposals to achieve the aims which the Government set out in the White Paper. These proposals will take account of the views of interested parties including the Medical Research Council.

Russian Language

38. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teaching of Russian in maintained schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 25 April at column *472*.

Schools (Financial Management)

39. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from school governors on the proposals for local financial management of schools.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from school governors commenting on aspects of local management of schools (LMS). The majority of local education authorities are now formally consulting the governing bodies and head teachers of their schools on their draft LMS schemes. I am impressed by the level of commitment to the development of satisfactory schemes being demonstrated by both authorities and schools.

Teachers (Records)

40. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what record is kept of those teachers who have left the profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The database of teacher records, maintained by the Department to administer the teachers' superannuation scheme, contains a record of all teachers who have completed a course of initial teacher training in England and Wales or have ever taught there, whether or not they are currently teaching. The information held in respect of teachers not currently teaching consists of their name, sex, age, degree and teacher training qualifications and details of previous service (if any).

Teacher Shortages (Barnet)

42. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to solve the problems of teacher shortages in Barnet.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Beaumont College

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date his Department asked for a copy of the independent inquiry report into Beaumont college; on what date that report was received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department was first informed of the allegations and the proposed independent inquiry by Beaumont college on 22 September 1988 and wrote to the college on 30 September 1988 asking to be informed as soon as possible of the inquiry's recommendations. The inquiry committee's investigation did not begin until 9 November 1988. It reported late February 1989. During this period my officials wrote to and telephoned the college on several occasions requesting early sight of the final report.

On 22 February 1989 the Department received the summary of the inquiry's findings. My officials continued to ask for the full report. The college's solicitors sent a copy of the full report to the Department on 11 April 1989, except for the appendices. After a further request the appendices were sent on 24 April 1989, except for

appendix 2, the list of witnesses. The solicitors have informed the Department that the report has been modified in that the names of the existing members of staff whose confidence was guaranteed, have been removed. Appendix 2 has been withheld for the same reason.

School Budgets

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how teacher salary costs are calculated in England for the local management formula for primary schools in the calculation of school budgets.

Mr. Butcher: Under local management of schools primary schools' budgets will be determined by a formula based largely on age-weighted pupil numbers. In deciding how heavily to weight each age of pupils, LEAs will need to make assumptions about average teaching costs for each age group. Circular 7/88 recognises that in the case of small schools there may be variations between the actual teaching costs and the LEA's average costs, due to teachers' position on the main scale and the incidence of salary safeguarding. LEAs may therefore adjust schools' budgets to reflect this factor.

In general, however, the degree of protection should be tapered according to the size of school, so that budget shares of schools with 10 or more teachers (excluding the head teacher and deputy head) are not adjusted to take this factor into account.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the number of pupils staying in education after 16 years of age in England and Wales.

Mr. Jackson: In 1987-88, 627,000 16-year-olds were participating in education or in the youth training scheme (YTS) in England and Wales. The details are as follows:

	Number
Full and part-time education	396,000
Youth Training Scheme	185,000
Evening only	46,000

This represents an overall participation rate of 82 per cent.

Nursery Education

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current percentage of children of pre-school age currently enrolled in state-run pre-school education in England.

Mrs. Rumbold: In January 1988 the number of pupils under five on roll in maintained nursery and primary schools in England as a percentage of the estimated three and four-year-old population was as follows:

Percentage of the estimated 3 and 4 year old population

	Per cent.
Pupils under 5 in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools	24
All pupils under 5 in maintained nursery and primary schools	45

Further and Higher Education

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average unit of funding for an advanced futher education student assumed to be in the 1988-89 financial year; by what percentage this figure was increased in real terms for the average unit of funding of a higher education student in the PCFC sector in 1989-90; and what assumptions were made for the level of inflation in this increase.

Mr. Jackson: In the academic year 1988-89, some 288,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students were enrolled on courses eligible for funding from the advanced further education (AFE) pools. The total provision for recurrent expenditure on the AFE pools in that year was £923 million, or £3,210 per capita.

The latest projections of 1989-90 academic year enrolments show some 287,000 FTE students on courses eligible for funding by the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding council (PCFC). The total provision for PCFC recurrent expenditure is £1,030 million, or £3,590 per capita.

These per capita figures do not give an accurate picture of the year on year increase in expenditure per student, because of the different scope of the AFE pools compared with provision for PCFC expenditure. Making the necessary adjustments, provision for PCFC recurrent expenditure in 1989-90 represents a 9 per cent. increase over comparable provision in 1988-89 in cash terms, and 3·8 per cent. in real terms on the basis of the 5 per cent. GDP deflator prevailing at the time that the public expenditure White Paper was published.

Absence from School

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the main reasons for recorded absence from schools of *(a)* pupils and *(b)* teachers for each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information about the level of, and reasons for, pupil absence from schools is not held centrally.

Some information about the level of teacher absence from maintained schools in England is contained in the 1987 primary and 1988 secondary school staffing surveys. About 4·5 per cent. of class teachers in nursery and primary schools were estimated to be on short term absence on any one day. No breakdown of this figure between absences due to illness, in-service training or other reasons is available.

Similar information in respect of secondary schools is expected to be available shortly. This will include a breakdown by reason for absence.

Teachers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to encourage local pay arrangements for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The school teachers' pay and conditions document 1988 provides wide flexibility to local education authorities to take account of local circumstances in setting the pay of their teachers. Those flexibilities will be

further enhanced in the 1989 document following the recommendations of the IAC, and will in future be exercised by the governors of schools with delegated budgets.

School Year

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had recently on the four-term school year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: None.

Schools (Funding)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has had about primary school aged children in local management schemes and formulae for funding.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has received a number of recent representations from primary school governors and head teachers commenting on local education authorities' proposals for funding schools under schemes of local management (LMS). My right hon. Friend has made clear that the allocation of resources to schools under LMS should be based on an assessment on schools' objective needs rather than simply on historical patterns of spending. It will be for local education authorities to determine the unit of resource for pupils of different ages in the light of their assessment of the relative needs of pupils of each age after consulting the governors and head teachers of each of their schools.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested will be placed in the Library within the next seven days.

Global Warming (Research)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to approve the Natural Environment Research Council research proposal which includes studies into the impact of global warming on British rivers and the expansion of a programme at universities for global atmospheric modelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Funding for the Natural Environment Research Council and for the science budget in general will be subject to review this autumn in the public expenditure survey. It is for the Natural Environment Research Council to decide its own research proposals within the overall funds available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beef

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet completed his analysis of the manner in which the beef special premium scheme is now being operated and the desirability of moving to an on-farm basis.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The new scheme has been running for only a month, and it is far too early yet to draw any conclusions. However, the transition from the variable premium scheme appears to have gone reasonably smoothly and the first payments under the new scheme have already been made.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider increasing from 1 January 1990 the number of qualifying animals in the new beef régime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The premium scheme applied in other member states until March this year included a limit of 50 head on the number of qualifying animals. We were able to get that figure up to 90 head in the recent negotiations on the new scheme. I strongly opposed the inclusion of any headage limit and voted against the scheme even with this higher limit. I shall continue to make clear my opposition to such limits in the Agriculture Council.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of *(a)* the actual amount paid to beef producers in the last available 12 months of the former variable beef premium and *(b)* his estimate of the total amount of the new beef special premium which will be paid to producers, in the first 12 months of operation.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our provisional estimate of the amount of beef variable premium paid to United Kingdom producers, net of drawback on intervention and clawback on exports, in the financial year 1988-89 is £103 million. Our current estimate of the likely expenditure on the beef special premium in 1989-90 is £44 million.

Leicester Market

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what analysis he has made of the impact of the closure of Leicester market last December on *(a)* specialist cattle, sheep and pig producers in the east midlands and *(b)* on the continued viability of other major marketing centres, such as Market Harborough; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am not aware of any problems for producers or for other markets in the area as a result of the cessation of trading of Leicester market in December. The future of Market Harborough market and other markets is a matter for their owners.

Aujesky's Disease

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make arrangements to deal in future with Aujesky's disease, as a category I disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The European Commission is known to be considering a categorisation of diseases

according to their seriousness, but as yet they have made no formal proposals either about such a categorisation or about Aujesky's disease. The Government will be looking for arrangements which safeguard the progress that has been made in dealing with this disease.

Knackeries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by year, for the last five years within the county of South Yorkshire, how many prosecutions have been brought against those operating illegal knackeries, or trading in unfit meat; what convictions have been obtained; and what penalties have been imposed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Enforcement of legislation relating to knackeries and meat hygiene is the responsibility of local authorities. No records of enforcement actions are collected.

Potatoes

Mr. Hind: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he has made any representations to the European Commission on the pricing policy of the Dutch potato processing industry with a view to European Court proceedings; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received any representations from the British potato processing industry complaining about attempts by Dutch producers to destroy the industry; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information he has on the pricing and dumping policy of the Dutch potato processing industry, including De Fritts Bootes and Kuibo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received no representations and I have no information on the matters raised by my hon. Friend, and I have not made any approach to the Commission.

Potato Marketing Board

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations have been received to date from the potato processing industry in favour of *(a)* the retention and *(b)* the abolition of the Potato Marketing Board.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Six representations from the processing industry had been received by 31 December 1988, the deadline set in the Government's consultation paper on future potato market policy. All favoured a free market.

Deer

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to introduce a ban on all imports of deer until satisfactory tests are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The issue of import licences for deer has been suspended. The tuberculosis testing requirements of deer in isolation, both in exporting countries and after their arrival in Great Britain, are being reviewed.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to introduce a programme of free testing of deer for tuberculosis, and slaughter, with compensation for infected animals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have nothing further to add to my reply to my hon. Friend of 15 March 1989 at column *248*.

Equine Herpes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make equine herpes a notifiable disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 27 April at column *680*.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amounts of *(a)* butter, *(b)* beef, *(c)* wine, and *(d)* cheese by weight or volume and at current prices, held in the county of South Yorkshire in each year since 1979 under EEC intervention policies.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Tonnes

Year ending	*Butter*		*Beef*		*Wine*	*Cheese*
	Held in intervention	*Privately owned and stored against EC aided contracts*	*Held in intervention*	*Privately owned and stored against EC aided contracts*		
1979	109	[1]—	nil	[1]—	nil	nil
1980	269	[1]—	nil	[1]—	nil	nil
1981	nil	[1]—	nil	[1]—	nil	nil
1982	110	[1]—	nil	[1]—	nil	nil
1983	2,422	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
1984	3,218	233	66·0	nil	nil	nil
1985	4,999	nil	122·0	nil	nil	nil
1986	7,898	110	46·0	nil	nil	nil
1987	3,412	44	15·0	nil	nil	nil
1988	1,757	nil	0·5	nil	nil	nil

[1]Details of privately owned stocks of butter held prior to 1983 are no longer available.

Current valuation figures for intervention butter and beef are £1,422·46/tonne and £1,322·71/tonne respectively.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 14 April to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, *Official Report*, column *748*, in which month of 1988 each suspected case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy was identified; and at which veterinary investigation centre each suspected case was examined.

Mr. Donald Thompson: This information is not held centrally.

Butter, Beef and Wheat Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect on the price of butter, beef and wheat in the United Kingdom in consequence of the various changes agreed at the Council of Ministers.

Mr. MacGregor The decisions taken on 22 April by the Council of Ministers, are expected to increase support prices in the United Kingdom by just over 1 per cent. for butter; 2·7 per cent. for beef and around 3·5 per cent. for wheat, but market prices and retail prices reflect many factors, notably the weather, levels of supply and demand, the operation of stabilisers and the weakening of intervention arrangements for these products in recent years.

Green Currency Changes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the various green currency changes agreed at the Council of Ministers; and if he will further list the member states affected by these changes.

Mr. MacGregor: In the settlement reached on 22 April the Council of Ministers agreed that the green currency exchange rates be changed so as to adjust the monetary gaps between green and market exchange rates by the following percentage points:

Dismantlement of real monetary gaps

	Percentage points
Denmark	
Sheepmeat	−3·060
All other sectors except	−1·000
France	
Milk	−1.529
Beef	−0·531
Sheepmeat	−0·561
All other livestock products except pigmeat	−1·777
Wine	−2·082
All other sectors	−1·529
Germany	
Milk	1·477
All other livestock products	0·446
Greece	
Sheepmeat	−9·481
Structures	−3·561
All other sectors	−16·500
Ireland	
Sheepmeat	−3·316
Beef	−2·000
All crop products	−1·565
All other sectors except pigmeat	−1·471
Italy	
Pigmeat	0·116
Cereals, oilseeds and dried fodder	−2.367
Fruit and vegetables and tobacco	−1·329
Wine	−2·168
All other sectors	−1·840
Netherlands	
Milk	0·866
All other sectors except cereals	0·347
Portugal	−2·125
Spain	
Wine, olive oil, rice, oilseed, fruit and vegetables, dried fodder, flax, hemp and silkworms	0·805
United Kingdom	
Pigmeat	−0·424
Sheepmeat	−4·361
Beef	−2·714
All crop products	−4·056
All other sectors	−3·270

European Community Price Settlement

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate has been made of the additional cost to consumers in Europe of the recent price package; and what estimate he has made of the extra cost reduction to the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: I estimate that the effect of the price settlement on the retail prices index (all items) in the United Kingdom will be very small, at most one twentieth of 1 per cent. I have no estimates for other member states or for the Community as a whole. The proportion of the overall European Community budget represented by CAP guarantee expenditure is expected to fall from 61 per cent. in 1988 to 60 per cent. in 1989.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will state his estimate of the increase in *(a)* the price of wheat and *(b)* the price of sugar beet that producers can expect as a result of the recent European Economic Community agricultural prices settlement;

(2) how the estimate of £155 million extra United Kingdom farm income resulting from the various European Economic Community farm price adjustments was calculated; how much of the £155 million is allocated to each type of product; and what effect on prices the settlement would have for each commodity.

Mr. MacGregor: The £155 million is the estimated full-year effect of the change in the green pound. Since the aggregate effect of the decisions on common support prices intervention arrangements and producer levies is estimated to be neutral, it is also the effect of the package as a whole. These effects are calculated using current annual volumes of production and adjusting for increases in the cost of purchased feedingstuffs, seeds and livestock. The breakdown between products is cereals, £65 million; other crops, £10 million; sheep, £30 million; milk, £40

million; other livestock products, £10 million. It is estimated that the aggregate effects of the Council's other decisions are neutral.

The settlement in itself is estimated to increase support levels in sterling by cereals, 3·5 per cent.; sugar beet, 2 per cent.; oilseeds, 4 per cent.; sheep, 4·2 per cent.; beef, 2·7 per cent; butter, 1 per cent.; and other milk products, 3·2 per cent (plus a further 1 per cent. or more in the less-favoured areas and 0·5 per cent. elsewhere, due to the reduction in the milk co-responsibility levy). Producer returns will, of course, be affected by various other factors, in particular the impact on support prices of the stabiliser mechanisms for cereals, oilseeds and sheep, which will be operating to reduce the support prices in accordance with formulae agreed last year when maximum guaranteed quantities and defined ewe numbers are exceeded.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals there are in the European Community for food irradiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: A proposal for a Council directive on this subject was submitted by the Commission to the Council on 9 December 1988. The proposal is published in the Official Journal of the European Communities dated 31 December 1988. A copy is in the Library of the House. The draft has been recommended for debate.

Sheep Scab

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place the report of his working party on sheep scab control in the Library.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have placed today in the Library of the House copies of the consultation document circulated to interested parties last December which contains the working party's findings, together with background information and an economic appraisal of the options considered.

Food Supplies

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, following his visit to the United States of America, he is now able to assess whether the world is faced with a problem of food surpluses or food shortages.

Mr. Ryder: My recent discussions in the United States confirmed my view that, with the underlying trends in output and consumption, the risk of widespread structural surpluses remains and that we should continue to pursue the objective of the Uruguay round to reform agricultural policies and expose agriculture more fully to market forces.

Amazonian Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to put the issue of the Brazilian Amazonian rain forest on the agenda of the next Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister on 26 April at column 959.

Daminozide

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what have been the conclusions of his Department following the review undertaken by the advisory committee on pesticides on health risks associated with the use of daminozide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Ministers responsible for the control of pesticides are currently considering the advice of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides on daminozide.

Chemical Safety

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of pesticide scientists involved in the review of the safety of chemicals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the pesticide review programme which was published on 16 March, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Pig Farming

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give figures for the number of people involved in pig farming for the years *(a)* 1960, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* 1985, *(e)* 1986, *(f)* 1987 and *(g)* 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 April 1989]:* Data in the form requested are not available for 1960 or 1970. For 1980 onwards, labour figures for holdings classified as predominantly pig holdings are given in the table, but even on these specialist holdings there are other activities to which some of this labour will be directed. About 25 per cent. of pigs are on non-specialist holdings but it is not possible to estimate how much of the labour on these is attributable to the pig enterprise.

England and Wales

Labour on agricultural holdings classified as predominantly pig holdings

	Number of holdings	*Proportion of national pig herd*	*Farmers, Partners and Directors and spouses*	*Whole time workers including salaried managers*	*Part time including seasonal and casual workers*
1980	8,339	73·9	12,859	9,356	4,715
1985	6,063	72·8	9,390	7,674	3,389
1986	5,971	73·6	9,268	7,695	3,230
1987	5,555	73·4	8,729	7,310	3,108
1988	5,301	74·4	8,340	6,653	2,830

Dairy Farming

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the figures for the number of people involved in dairy farming for the years *(a)* 1960, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* 1985, *(e)* 1986, *(f)* 1987 and *(g)* 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 21 April 1989]:* Data in the form requested are not available for 1960 or 1970. For 1980 onwards, labour figures for holdings classified as specialist or mainly dairying are given in the table, but even on these specialist holdings there are other activities to which some of this labour will be directed. About 15 per cent. of dairy cows are on non-specialist holdings, but it is not possible to estimate how much of the labour on these is attributable to the dairy enterprise.

England and Wales
Labour on agricultural holdings classified as specialist or mainly dairying

	Number of holdings	*Proportion of national dairy herd*	*Farmers Partners and Directors and Spouses*	*Whole time workers salaried managers*	*Part time workers including seasonal and casual workers*
1980	40,365	85·8	70,332	32,692	19,315
1985	34,854	85·8	63,285	27,761	16,867
1986	33,967	86·1	62,092	26,462	17,090
1987	32,162	85·4	58,881	24,384	16,139
1988	30,414	84·5	56,213	22,413	15,143

Dioxin in Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the food products he is testing for the presence of dioxin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 28 May 1989]:* My Ministry's food science laboratory has an ongoing research programme on dioxins designed to address a number of issues. Human breast milk has been examined as part of an international collaborative exercise: the analysis of composite food samples is under way in order to help confirm which classes of food are associated with dioxins: and individual retail purchases of a range of fatty foods such as milk, meat products and fish are also being examined. Finally, preliminary studies on the migration of dioxins into food from paper-based products such as milk cartons, tea bags and coffee filter papers have recently been carried out following reports that certain bleached paper products may contain dioxins. Results will be published as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the income of pensioners with no other source of income than state benefits as a proportion of the average earnings of all male workers in each year since 1974.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Average gross income of pensioners with no other source of income than state benefits as a proportion of the average earnings of all male workers

Year	
1974	27
1975	27
1976	27
1977	29
1978	29
1979	28
1980	28
1981	29
1982	30
1983	30
1984	31
1985	30
1986	29

Notes:
1. Pensioner incomes are from the family expenditure survey.
2. Earnings data are from the new earnings survey.

The average gross income of this group of pensioners as a proportion of all manual workers' earnings was 32 per cent. in 1974, 33 per cent. in 1979, increasing to 37 per cent. in 1986.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, with respect to the support grades in his Department *(a)* what is the number of staff employed, *(b)* how many vacancies there are and how many of these have existed for over one month and over three months, *(c)* how many temporary and casual appointments there are and *(d)* how much overtime was worked by them in London and elsewhere.

Mr. Scott: At 1 April 1989 there were 2,844 staff employed and 52·5 current vacancies. Information about the length of time vacancies have existed cannot be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost. There were 76 casual and temporary appointments and 1,688 hours overtime worked during March 1989. This information is provisional and does not include locally paid staff employed in the regional organisation.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish for each month since April 1988 the number of people submitting claims for income support and family credit and the number unsuccessful; and if the latter data can be expressed as a percentage of the former.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is in the tables.

Income support

Period	Claims received	Unsuccessful claims	Unsuccessful claims as a percentage of claims received
11-30 April 1988	206,061	32,595	15·8
May 1988	285,703	69,318	24·3
June 1988	336,929	74,935	22·3
July 1988	430,369	68,781	16·0
August 1988	351,719	72,752	20·7
September 1988	366,026	61,121	16·7
October 1988	328,929	71,649	21·8
November 1988	311,715	66,070	21·2
December 1988	236,160	46,394	19·6
January 1989	324,572	63,699	19·6
February 1989	278,970	58,365	20·9
March 1989	271,121	58,043	21·4

Family credit

Period	Claims received	Invalid claims	Valid claims disallowed	Unsuccessful claims as a percentage of valid claims received
11-30 April 1988	96,505	5,199	18,897	32·0
May 1988	41,721			
June 1988	52,293	3,313	13,392	27·0
July 1988	46,100	3,142	14,570	27·8
August 1988	46,376	3,143	14,883	27·0
September 1988	47,759	2,190	8,660	26·4
October 1988	56,373	2,808	14,886	24·9
November 1988	57,850	2,690	15,226	24·8
December 1988	44,834	2,521	12,629	26·1
January 1989	63,638	3,621	15,696	26·9
February 1989	60,318	3,222	15,506	25·6
March 1989	68,637	4,279	15,189	24·4

Source: Local office and family credit branch data collected for management information purposes. They are provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* unemployment benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available figures are:

	Number
(a) Income Support	4,416,000
(b) Family Credit	254,000
(c) Unemployment Benefit	500,000

Social Fund

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the Peckham Department of Social Security offices were given from the social fund *(a)* in 1988-89 and *(b)* in 1989-90; whether this has increased in line with inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The details of the social fund allocations are as follows:

	1988-89		*1989-90*	
	Loans £	*Grants* £	*Loans* £	*Grants* £
Camberwell AO	442,473	186,487	409,866	175,936
Kennington Park ILO	377,078	158,672	369,213	153,717
Peckham ILO	343,582	145,406	329,774	145,861

A note explaining the basis on which the social fund allocations for 1989-90 were calculated is in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to how many pensioners receive only the state retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 30 September 1988, 2,168,320 pensioners in Great Britain were receiving only the basic state retirement pension, that is they were not in receipt of graduated pension or additional pension. However, these pensioners may also have been receiving other contributory and non-contributory benefits. In particular, a pensioner who has only the basic state pension and little or no other income or savings may be entitled to income support and housing benefit.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the percentage of pensioners on incomes on or below 140 per cent. of income support level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The low income families statistics, which show the number and characteristics of pensioners not receiving supplementary benefit but with incomes within 140 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale rates have been discontinued. Alternative measures of net income before and after housing costs have been introduced. Figures on this alternative basis covering the years 1981, 1983 and 1985 can be found in "Households Below Average Income", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the percentage of pensioners in the lowest quintile of the national income distribution; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the causes of the reduction in the percentage of pensioners in the lowest quintile in recent years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many pensioners are in the highest quintile of the population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1979, 38 per cent. of pensioner tax units (a pensioner tax unit is a single person of state pension age or over, or a couple where the man is of state pension age or over) were in the lowest fifth of the national income distribution. In 1986, the latest year for which information is available, this figure had fallen to 24 per cent. The factors contributing to this reduction include the 23 per cent. real terms increase in pensioners' average total net income between 1979 and 1986, and the fact that pensioners' incomes increased twice as fast as those of the population as a whole over the same period. In 1986, 6 per cent. of pensioners were in the highest fifth of the national income distribution.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the numbers of pensioners in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As at 30 September 1988 there were approximately 9·4 million retirement pensioners resident in Great Britain.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of pensioners receiving *(a)* income support and *(b)* housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available figure for income support is 1,671,000. This relates to cases where either the claimant or his partner is aged 60 or over. Information for housing benefit recipients is not yet available.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners lost entitlement to housing benefit following the introduction of the capital cut-off limit of £8,000; what was the estimated annual saving to the Exchequer as against the previous arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The housing benefit capital limit was introduced on 14 April 1988 at £6,000, at an estimated net saving of £80 million; it was increased to £8,000 on 13 May 1988. The increase cost an estimated £35 million and restored entitlement to housing benefit to around 100,000 of the 300,000 people—almost all pensioners—who had lost entitlement in April.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the percentage of total pensioners' income in 1988 represented by social security benefits; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the percentage of total pensioners' income in 1988 represented by occupational pensions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will estimate the percentage of total pensioners' income in 1988 represented *(a)* by savings and *(b)* by investments; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will estimate the percentage of total pensioners' income in 1988 represented by earnings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986, the latest year for which information is available, 59 per cent. of pensioners' average gross income was derived from social security benefits, 20 per cent. from occupational pensions, 14 per cent. from savings and investments, and 7 per cent. from earnings.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

Note: There is no generally agreed distinction between savings and investments.

SOCIAL SECURITY

DSS Leaflets

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Bradford Gingerbread centre is going to receive leaflets ordered from DSS Leaflets, PO Box 21, Stanmore, on 7 December 1988; when the last batch of leaflets ordered by Bradford Gingerbread centre on 10 August last were dispatched; if he has any plans to improve the service offered by DSS Leaflets, Stanmore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the DSS leaflets unit has no record of an order dated 7 December 1988. The order dated 10 August 1988 was dispatched on 4 April 1989.

The principal factors causing delay in the distribution of some orders from Canons Park leaflets unit are the considerably increased demand for bulk orders, and the physical constraints of the unit which preclude an immediate expansion of capacity or the recruitment of more staff to cope with this demand.

From 1 May requests for bulk orders of leaflets and forms from organisations such as Gingerbread, will be supplied within 48 hours from receipt of order.

The Department will be testing a service giving a 48-hour turnround for members of the public. People will be able to order leaflets by telephone using the Department's Freeline or by preprinted card.

Income Support

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of *(a)* pregnant women on income support and *(b)* free milk and vitamin awards to women on income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provisional figures for May 1988 show that approximately 41,000 pregnant women on income support were claiming free welfare milk and vitamins. No separate information is available about the total number of pregnant women on income support.

Earnings

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes there have been to the definition of earnings for national insurance calculation purposes since the last fiscal year; and under what authority such changes were made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 3(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 defines earnings so as to include any remuneration or profit derived from an employment. In May 1988 the Social Security (Contributions) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/No. 860) came into force. These regulations, which were made by exercising powers in section 3(2) and 3(3) of the 1975 Social Security Act, provided that payments to employed earners in the form of a wide range of securities but not equities, should be included in earnings for contributions purposes.

Paragraph 1 of schedule 7 to the Social Security Bill will also amend section 3 of the Social Security Act 1975 to provide that earnings will include payments which are consideration for restrictive undertakings specified in subsection (1) and (2) of section 313 of the Income and Taxes Act 1988.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what differences there are between the definitions of earnings for national insurance and PAYE purposes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: National insurance contributions are charged on gross earnings and only earnings of all employees, with the exception of those employees who are over pensionable age. National insurance contributions are not charged on occupational pensions, and investment income. Further information on what is included in gross pay for national insurance purposes is included in the recently published "Employers Manual on National Insurance Contributions", which I have placed in the Library.

Income tax is deducted under PAYE on income from offices and employments, occupational pensions, certain social security benefits and lump sum payments.

Hillsborough Disaster Fund

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect payments from the Hillsborough disaster fund will have on the level of benefits for bereaved families.

Mr. Scott: No payments have yet been made by the Hillsborough disaster fund and therefore it is not possible to say whether and how they might affect benefits. Officials have been in touch with the fund's administrators to advise them on the social security rules. The majority of social security benefits would not in any case be affected by any payment from the fund.

Marginal Tax Rates

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide figures for *(a)* the number of individuals and *(b)* the number of families facing marginal tax rates in excess of (i) 70 per cent., (ii) 80 per cent., and (iii) 90 per cent. from 1973 to the present day.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish estimates of the numbers of individuals or families facing marginal tax rates in excess of 70 per cent., 80 per cent., 90 per cent., 100 per cent., and above 100 per cent., for each year from 1979-80 to 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 11 April 1989]:* Table 15.15 on page 16 of Cm. 615 sets out estimates for November 1985 and April 1988. Information on the numbers of individuals and families by different marginal deduction rates is not available for earlier years. I also refer the hon. Members to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 17 February, at column *393*. The table sets out the latest estimates of the numbers of working heads who might face combined rates of deduction of 70 per cent. or more. The figures reflect the March 1989 Budget and include the effects of the employees' national insurance reform which takes effect in October.

Combined marginal income tax and benefit withdrawal rates 1989-90
Working heads of tax units (000) Great Britain numbers facing combined rates of over 70 per cent.—in bands

	Families with children	Couples and single people	Total
Over 100 per cent.	—	—	—
Over 90 per cent.	40	5	45
Over 80 per cent.	195	15	210
Over 70 per cent.	365	50	415

Notes:

1. Marginal deduction rates shown are for heads of tax units in receipt of family credit/housing benefit where at least one partner works 24 hours or more a week.
2. All estimates are for 1989-90 and are based on combined 1985 and 1986 family expenditure survey data and are consistent with this year's Government expenditure White Paper.
3. Some totals may not sum because of rounding.
4. Denotes an estimate of fewer than 2,500.
5. The total number of working heads of tax-units with more than 24-weekly remunerative hours is approximately 17 million. Those shown in the table therefore represent only 2·5 per cent. of the total.

Retirement Incomes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, on the basis of data in the family expenditure survey for 1986, he will state the average percentage income of *(a)* all retired households, *(b)* single retired households, *(c)* retired one-man households and *(d)* retired one-woman households, in each case in all five quintile groupings, which is derived from (i) original income, (ii) contributory retirement pension, (iii) supplementary benefit and (iv) housing benefit; and what is the total average income of each qroup in each quintile.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 April 1989]:* On the basis of data in the family expenditure survey pensioners' average income cannot be broken down separately into the proportions derived from contributory retirement pensions, supplementary benefit and housing benefit. These sources of income are taken together in column 2.

	Proportion of gross income derived from original income[1]	Proportion of gross income derived from Retirement Pension and income-related benefits	Average gross weekly income
	Percentage	Percentage	£
All pensioners tax units[2]			
Lowest Q1	8	90	56·90
Q2	11	86	67·00
Q3	16	80	71·10
Q4	36	57	94·90
Highest Q5	72	25	203·50
All	42	55	98·68
All single pensioners			
Lowest Q1	7	92	45·10
Q2	9	89	53·50
Q3	11	87	60·60
Q4	25	69	71·10
Highest Q5	67	29	146·30
All	34	62	75·30
Single men over pension age			
Lowest Q1	9	91	48·30
Q2	11	88	55·40
Q3	14	86	61·50
Q4	38	59	77·90
Highest Q5	74	24	170·40
All	42	56	82·60
Single women over pension age			
Lowest Q1	6	92	44·30
Q2	8	90	53·00
Q3	10	87	60·10
Q4	22	72	70·20
Highest Q5	63	31	138·80
All	32	64	73·30

[1] Original income consists of occupational and personal pensions, income from savings and investment, and any earnings from employment or self-employment.

[2] A pensioner tax unit is a single person of state pension age or over, or a married couple where the man is of state pension age or over. Each group has been divided into quintiles on the basis of equivalised gross income.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members Dining Room

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council on how many occasions tables have had to be removed from the Members Dining Room because of staff shortages in the last year.

Mr. Wakeham: On four occasions.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the hourly rate of pay for waitresses employed in the Members Dining Room; and what rate is paid to agencies supplying waitresses.

Mr. Beith: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons

Commission, what is the full establishment of waitresses in the Members Dining Room; and how many are currently employed.

Mr. Beith: The full establishment of waiters/waitresses (excluding those who serve only wine) is 15. The current complement is eight.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what discussions the Commission has had with trade union representatives of dining room staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: None by the Commission. Formal discussions with union representatives take place with management through the Whitley committee machinery in accordance with recognised procedures.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, when he expects the Members Dining Room to return to a full complement of fully employed staff.

Mr. Beith: It is not possible to be precise. Four more waitresses are expected to begin duties in the very near future and efforts are being made to recruit the staff needed to fill the remaining three posts. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to be informed when the staff is back to full strength.

HEALTH

"Putting Patients First"

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information on opting out or indication of interest in opting out under the terms of his White Paper "Putting Patients First", has been required from hospitals in the south west region by 8 May; what is the significance of this date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The chief executive of the NHS management board wrote to all regional general managers on 14 March about the preparation of expressions of interest in self-governing hospital status. A copy of the letter (reference: EL(89)MB/58) has been placed in the Library. Regional returns are to be made to the Department by 31 May; expressions of interest are to reach RHAs by 8 May to give them time to comment.

Dental Services

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of weeks per year worked by the dental staff of the former Dental Estimates Board in each year during the period 1985 to 1988, excluding sick leave, leave, study leave and attendance at courses.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Weeks*
1985	43·17
1986	44·45
1987	42·95
1988	43·05

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current time input relating to an estimate form submitted for prior approval compared with the average payment case.

Mr. Freeman: During March 1989 the dental practice board returned requests for approval of dental treatment within 18 days of receipt and took 24 days to issue payment schedules for treatment fees claimed by dentists. Both these figures are averages.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the last date when the work of the dental estimates board was subjected to an approved efficiency study; and what was the result.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent efficiency study was undertaken in 1984. A number of recommendations concerning improvements in the board's organisation and procedures were made and implemented. In line with other health service bodies the board is subject to the annual accountability review arrangements. A comprehensive review of the board's role and function is planned for later this year.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of dental estimates authorised for payment in each quarter from the beginning of 1985 until the most recent date when figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Estimates Scheduled (England and Wales)

Quarter	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
1st.	8,198,837	8,363,883	8,153,035	8,494,306	9,183,731
2nd.	8,000,376	8,692,834	8,615,213	8,378,456	—
3rd.	8,564,944	8,075,163	8,623,781	9,112,402	—
4th.	8,286,568	8,933,076	8,467,152	9,481,178	—
	33,050,725	34,064,956	33,859,181	35,466,342	

Defibrillators

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, region by region, the number of defibrillators which have been purchased *(a)* by the health authority, *(b)* not by the health authority and *(c)* in the latter case, the main source of funding for each defibrillator.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally. Arrangements for purchase of equipment of this kind are a matter for each separate health authority.

Nurses (Assaults)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has held, or proposes to hold, discussions with the police about assaults on nurses;

(2) what is the trend in the number of assaults on nurses;

(3) how many nurses' homes are signposted in hospital grounds;

(4) how many nurses have been issued with personal alarms by their employers;

(5) what steps he is taking to train nursing staff in violence avoidance;

(6) in how many nurses' homes full-time security staff are employed;

(7) what is his estimate of the number of nurses who have been assaulted in hospitals or hospital grounds in the last year for which figures are available;

(8) if he will set up a working party to study the incidence of violence against nurses and the reasons for it and to make recommendations;

(9) if he will provide central funding and specific grants for measures to prevent violence against nurses;

(10) if he has issued any recent circulars to health authorities about measures to be taken to cope with violence against nurses;

(11) what information he has as to how many break-ins have been reported in nurses' homes in the last year for which figures are available;

(12) what steps he has taken to ensure that nurses are provided with transport after working on late duty;

(13) if he has made any recommendations to health authorities about standards of lighting in hospital grounds.

Mr. Mellor: Although we do not hold the detailed information about nurses requested by the right hon. Member centrally, many health authorities have taken effective measures to ensure the safety of their staff. These include the employment of contract security staff; close circuit television; personal alarms; two way radios; improved lighting and the introduction of professional nurse triage to reduce waiting times in accident and emergency departments.

At national level the DHSS advisory committee on violence to staff was established in February 1987 to examine the problem throughout the caring services. The committee, which comprised management, professional bodies, family practitioners and trades union representatives from all the services, was chaired by my noble Friend Lord Skelmersdale. Its report was published in July last year. Copies were issued to all NHS general managers and placed in the Library.

The report stresses the importance of accurate reporting of incidents and its principal recommendations relate to the need for employers to recognise the fundamental place of a safe working environment in the determination of local priorities and budgets and the development of local safety and security policies. Specifically, it urges liaison with the police and with staff and their representatives; training in the avoidance and control of violent situations; local collaboration and the sharing of experiences; and the counselling of victims. A video reinforcing the committee's recommendations and in which I stressed ministerial concern about this important issue was sent to all health authorities in February this year.

I strongly endorse the theme of the report that the issue of violence to staff is one which can be most effectively tackled locally by management and staff working together.

Aluminium

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health as part of the research that is to take place into the effects of aluminium in infants, if he will include a study of the extent to which aluminium sulphate added to water supplies as a cleaning agent enters the body and is hazardous.

Mr. Freeman: The Medical Research Council, which is the main Government-funded body dealing with biomedical and clinical research, and which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, is sponsoring research into the uptake and biological effects of aluminium from all sources, including drinking water.

Other independent research is being undertaken into the sources of aluminium in infants' diet and its absorption and excretion.

The Department of Health's independent advisory committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment will be asked to advise on the results of this research when they are available.

Cholesterol

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the National Health Service of carrying out a test to establish a patient's blood cholesterol level; and whether such a test can be requested on a routine visit to a general practitioner.

Mr. Freeman: Information on actual cost of tests to establish a patient's blood cholesterol level is not collected centrally. It is known however that the cost will vary depending on whether such tests are carried out at a large NHS laboratory or elsewhere,—for example in a GP's surgery. These tests are available under the National Health Service.

Hospices

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has yet completed his review into the funding of hospices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. I hope to complete the review shortly.

Airline Foods

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 6 April, *Official Report*, columns *289-90*, if he has now given consideration to the report "A Survey of Microbiological Quality of Airline Foods" by three London boroughs; and if he will now make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have recently received a copy of the survey of the microbiological quality of airline meals. It is still receiving careful consideration within the Department.

Consultants

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by each health district the number of consultants in each specialty who have merit awards; what this figure represents as a percentage of the total number of consultant posts; whether he has any proposals to change the way in which merit awards are allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information by district readily available. Information for each region of England and Wales and for each specialty on the number of holders of distinction awards is given in the tables.

The working paper 7 "NHS Consultants: Appointments, Contracts and Distinction Awards", following the White Paper "Working for Patients", sets out the Government's proposals to change the way in which distinction awards are allocated, and will be discussed with the medical profession.

Distinction awards
Analysis by region at 31 December 1988

Region	*Awards holders*	
	Numbers	*Percentage*
Northern	342	33
Yorkshire	358	33
Trent	440	33
East Anglian	209	33
North West Thames	450	39
North East Thames	619	40
South East Thames	476	37
South West Thames	351	37
Special Health Authorities	343	57
Wessex	293	35
Oxford	272	36
South Western	316	34
West Midlands	503	33
Mersey	260	34
North Western	468	34
Wales	298	34
Total	5,648	35

Note: —Where a practitioner has a contract in more than one Region he has been counted in each, but only once in the total.

Distinction awards: Analysis by specialty and percentage distribution
31 December 1988
England and Wales

	Total awards	
	Number	*per cent.*
All specialties: Total	5,648	35·0
Accident and emergency	32	17·0
Anaesthetics	598	29·0
Cardiology	76	53·0
Cardio-thoracic surgery	55	47·0
Clinical neurological physiology	18	32·0
Community medicine	162	31·0
Oral surgery	112	39·0
Orthodontics	46	30·0
Restorative dentistry	33	32·0
Dermatology	85	36·0
Diseases of the chest	54	48·0
General medicine	705	47·0
General surgery	572	49·0
Genito-urinary medicine	26	18·0
Geriatric medicine	117	21·0
Infectious diseases	13	45·0
Mental illness	367	29·0
Child and adolescent psychiatry	79	21·0
Forensic psychiatry	13	22·0
Mental handicap	35	19·0
Psychotherapy	22	25·0
Neurology	96	55·0
Neurosurgery	55	56·0
Nuclear medicine	16	55·0
Obstetrics and gynaecology	325	40·0
Occupational medicine	2	12·0
Ophthalmology	156	35·0
Orthopaedic surgery	269	36·0
Otolaryngology	144	36·0
Paediatrics	269	37·0
Paediatric surgery	24	55·0
Pathology: General	3	50·0
Blood transfusion	11	39·0
Chemical pathology	75	40·0
Haematology	126	32·0
Histopathology	203	33·0
Immunopathology	22	52·0
Medical microbiology	112	35·0
Neuro-pathology	13	42·0
PHLS only	12	41·0
Plastic surgery	45	43·0
Radiology	289	27·0
Radiotherapy	82	38·0
Rheumatology and rehabilitation	79	32·0

Cervical Cancer Tests

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking urgently to review the system of cervical cancer smear tests so that no women whose tests have proved positive suffer delays of more than three to four weeks before starting treatment.

Mr. Mellor: Department of Health guidance, HC(88) 1, states that district health authorities should ensure that adequate facilities are available for the prompt investigation, treatment and follow-up of women whose smears show that this is necessary. In order to monitor health authorities' achievement in this respect we have asked them to notify us in their 1989 planning statements of waiting times for further diagnosis and treatment, particularly colposcopy, where these exceed four weeks. We shall then be pressing health authorities to take action where there are problems.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Baby Food

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement about the health risk in baby food;

(2) when he was first warned of the health risk in baby food;

(3) whether he has obtained the advice of the chief medical officer about the health risk in baby food;

(4) whether he plans to issue any advice to baby food manufacturers about continuing sale of baby food;

(5) whether he plans to issue any advice to parents about the health risks in baby food;

(6) whether he plans to issue any advice to health workers about the risks in baby food.

Mr. Freeman: We first became aware of particles of glass being found in jars of baby food in March 1989, when the manufacturers arranged withdrawal of the batch

concerned and advised the Department. Since then, as my hon. Friend said on 26 April at column 949, there have been growing numbers of reports which have been recognised as deliberate contamination and this is the subject of police inquiries. The Department on 28 April endorsed common-sense advice to the public which, if followed, should remove any risk. This advice is being passed also to the National Health Service and to chief environmental health officers of local authorities. The question of continuing the sale of these products is for the manufacturers in consultation with the police.

Population Statistics

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the present population of England and Wales who are over the age of 18 years.

Mr. Freeman: It is estimated that the resident population of England and Wales aged 18 and over was 38,607,700 at mid-1987. An estimate relating to mid-1988 will be available shortly.

Coastal Waters (Pollution)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has any record of specific skin diseases and infections occurring amongst fishermen operating in British coastal waters; and what investigations his Department has carried out into the incidence of skin diseases and infections occurring amongst fishermen operating in British coastal waters.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* These diseases are not notifiable diseases and, therefore, this Department does not keep any records. No investigations have been carried out by this Department.

Stump Socks

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations have been received by his Department about stump socks for amputees;

(2) where National Health Service supplies of stump socks are listed.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* These are matters for the Disablement Services authority to which the hon. Member should address his question.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 May 1989

THE ARTS

Objects in Lieu

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts which of the offers of objects in lieu of tax during the financial year 1988-89 listed in his answer on 24 April, *Official Report*, column *432*, carried a condition as to destination; if he will give the relevant particulars; whether he will give particulars of the 10 portraits satisfying tax of £260,717; and whether he will give the total sum of tax thus satisfied during the year in question, with a breakdown into *(a)* the total covered by the basic provision and *(b)* the total covered by recourse to the reserve.

Mr. Luce: Among the items accepted in lieu of tax in the financial year 1988-89 referred to in my answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, c. *432*, the following carried conditions:

Print by William Blake—conditional upon allocation to the Fitzwilliam Museum.
"The Artist's Studio" by Tillemans—conditional upon allocation to the Castle Museum, Norwich.
Roubiliac busts—conditional upon remaining in situ at Mellerstain House.
Kauffman portraits—conditional upon allocation to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.
"Fabula" by El Greco—conditional upon allocation to the National Galleries of Scotland.

The £260,717 referred to in the answer of 24 April has been paid in respect of nine portraits accepted in lieu of tax (a tenth portrait was withdrawn at a late stage); further details of the acceptance of this conditional offer and allocation will be announced shortly by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The total tax satisfied during the 1988-89 financial year was £6,719,816·88, of which £2 million was covered by the basic provision and £4,719,816·88 was spent from the Reserve. The total includes £30 additional tax on the Kauffman portraits, announced as £34,100 in the reply of 24 April.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Indecent and Obscene Items (Seizure)

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many indecent or obscene items have been seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise under the Customs and Excise Act 1952 and the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The number of indecent or obscene items seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, under these Acts, in each year since 1979 was as follows:

	Number
1979-80	98,300
1980-81	66,600
1981-82	83,500
1982-83	172,000
1983-84	170,000
1984-85	43,400
1985-86	53,100
1986-87	33,000
1987-88	29,000
1988-89	24,000

The European Court of Justice ruled in 1985 that the prohibition on the importation from the European Community of indecent or obscene articles imposed by section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 is not lawful under article 36 of the treaty of Rome, unless the domestic manufacture and sale of these articles was also prohibited by United Kingdom legislation.

The effect of the ruling was that:

(a) Customs could continue to seize obscene material but not, with the exception of material involving children, seize indecent material; and
(b) Customs could no longer seize items such as sex aids which can be legally sold on the home market.

Although the decision of the European Court of Justice related solely to material imported from the Community, Customs and Excise consider that it would be inequitable and impracticable not to apply the same standards to all imports. The changes following from this ruling account for the decline in the number of items seized since 1985.

Fuel Duty

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the duty paid on *(a)* aviation kerosene and *(b)* fuels used by commercial vehicles.

Mr. Lilley: The effective rate of duty on aviation kerosene is nil.

Most commercial vehicles use diesel fuel (DERV), some use petrol and a few use liquified petroleum gas (LPG). The rates of duty are:

	£1 litre
DERV	0·1729
Petrol	
(unleaded)	0·1772
(leaded, 4 star)	0·2044
LPG	0·1022

Exchange Equalisation Account Act

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to amend section 4 of the Exchange Equalisation Account Act 1979 so as to provide that the Comptroller and Auditor-General's certificate on the operations on and transactions in connection with the account is accompanied by information of the losses incurred each month.

Mr. Lilley: No. I see no reason to change the practice of successive Governments regarding the disclosure of details of the exchange equalisation account.

Personal Equity Plans

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from investment trusts and unit trusts about personal equity plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have received representations from a number of investment trusts and unit trusts, and from the Association of Investment Trust Companies. The main concern is that investment trusts in particular will find it difficult to meet the requirement from 6 April 1990 that, to qualify for investment through a personal equity plan, 75 per cent. of their own investment must be in United Kingdom ordinary shares. The Government have therefore decided to introduce four relaxations:

(i) To help investment and unit trust PEP schemes in existence before the Budget, an investor will have the option of investing up to £750 a year in an investment or unit trust which does not satisfy the 75 per cent United Kingdom requirement. This will be an alternative to investing up to £2,400 in trusts which do satisfy the requirement.

(ii) Third market and unquoted shares of United Kingdom companies in a unit or investment trusts' portfolio will count towards the 75 per cent. test.

(iii) Unit trust "funds of funds" will be qualifying investments, provided that the unit trusts in which the fund of funds invests are authorised securities schemes. From 6 April 1990, funds of funds must also comply with the requirement to invest at least 75 per cent. in United Kingdom equities.

(iv) Investment trusts' "capital" and "income" shares will also count towards the 75 per cent. test, as will other ordinary shares issued by them. This will enable investment trusts (and unit trusts) to invest in United Kingdom investment trusts which issue capital or income shares rather than ordinary shares. But, as with unit trust "funds of funds", the underlying investments must, overall, be 75 per cent. in United Kingdom companies.

The Personal Equity Plan Regulations 1989 will be amended in due course to reflect these changes.

Exports

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has to the level of exports as a percentage of total production in the United Kingdom in 1974, 1979 and 1989; and what are the comparable figures in other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Figures for 1974, 1979 and 1987, the latest year for which comparable figures are available, are given in "OECD National Accounts" volume 1 1960-1987 for all the countries in question except the United Kingdom. Figures for the United Kingdom can be found in the CSO publication "Economic Trends Annual Supplement" and in the CSO press release of 17 March 1989.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Medical Schools

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what extra provision will be made in medical schools for students to receive course tuition in general practice business management; and whether such provision will be made additional to, or within, the current curriculum.

Mr. Jackson: Medical education and training follows the recommendations of the education committee of the General Medical Council. These already provide for training in administrative and managerial skills to be given as part of the postgraduate, vocational phase of medical training.

University Teachers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university teachers have taken early retirement in each year since 1979 *(a)* in total, *(b)* in each university and *(c)* in each subject.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is as given in my reply of 10 February 1989 at columns *842-842*. Details for individual institutions and subjects are not held centrally.

Teacher Training

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements will apply for the approval of courses of initial teacher training when the term of office of the members of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education expires at the end of 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As I announced yesterday, I am today issuing a consultation document setting out my proposals in detail and asking for comments by 30 June. I have placed a copy in the Library. I propose that the council is reconstituted, that the criteria for the approval of courses are made tougher, and that the role of local committees in the accreditation process is strengthened.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking within the European Economic Community Council of Ministers to ensure that the aid provided through Lomé conventions III and IV to the Ethiopian Government is administered in the interests of, and actually reaches, those for whom it is intended.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are actively involved in examining proposals prepared by the Commission for development assistance to Ethiopia under the Lomé conventions through our participation in the European development fund committee, on which all member states are represented. We have consistently stressed to the Commission the importance of close monitoring of such assistance to ensure that the aid reaches the intended beneficiaries.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the total British public and private overseas aid for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: This figure is not yet available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Whooping Cough Vaccine Cases (Legal Aid)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Attorney-General for what reason legal aid has been terminated for whooping cough vaccine cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There is no policy to terminate legal aid in whooping cough vaccine cases. Each case is

being re-examined individually following the judgment in Loveday v. Renton as, under the Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1989, the Legal Aid Board is required to reassess legal aid certificates in the light of new information or knowledge. The Lord Chancellor may not intervene, or influence the decisions of the Legal Aid Board.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to the kingdom of Morocco on 28 March 1989, she raised the matter of the non-aligned states' policy towards the 1990 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference.

The Prime Minister: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Nigeria on 29 March, she raised the matter of the status of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and the prospects for the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference, with Ministers of the Nigerian Government.

The Prime Minister: No.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister when the Cabinet Office started and completed the review of the 1985 conventions governing Government advertising; when the revised commentary was issued to Departments; and whether she will place a copy of them in the Library.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* A review of the conventions on Government publicity and advertising took place in early 1988. Consolidated supplementary guidance was issued by the Cabinet Office to Departments in March 1989 and I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Namibia (Uranium)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent visit to Namibia, she raised with the authorities there the future of Namibian uranium procurement for United Kingdom nuclear weapons and nuclear power programmes.

The Prime Minister: No.

Sir Alan Walters

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will publish in the *Official Report* a list of Sir Alan Walters' outside interests;

(2) what are Sir Alan Walters' connections with the Centre for Policy Studies.

The Prime Minister: Sir Alan Walters is a private individual who has a consulting contract with the Government. It would not be appropriate to publish or require him to publish his interests in or connections with private sector bodies.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the salary of Sir Alan Walters on his appointment.

The Prime Minister: Sir Alan Walters' remuneration is linked to that of a second permanent secretary.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Special Constables

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current number of special constables in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There were 15,788 special constables in England and Wales on 31 December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available.

Prisons (Child Care Provision)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in Yorkshire which have child care provision for inmates; how often these are inspected by outside agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange, near York, has a mother and baby unit which provides accommodation for up to 15 mothers with their babies.

A health visitor from the local area health authority regularly visits the unit and provides child care advice to inmate mothers. Arrangements for a Department of Health team to inspect mother and baby units and report periodically on matters such as child care practice are being considered.

South Yorkshire Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many special constables in the South Yorkshire police force are *(a)* from ethnic minorities and *(b)* women; and if he will show these figures also as a percentage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 December 1988, the South Yorkshire police special constabulary had a total of 309 members. Of this number, 11—3·6 per cent.—were from the ethnic minorities and 103—33·3 per cent.—were women.

Rugby League Clubs (Police Costs)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the hourly charges made to rugby league clubs for police officers on duty at professional rugby league matches held within areas covered by the North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Cumbria police authorities.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the present charges per hour, exclusive of VAT, for the services of each police constable provided for duty inside the grounds of rugby league clubs in the area mentioned are as follows:

Police force	*Cost £ (excluding VAT)*
North Yorkshire	18·30
South Yorkshire	16·20
West Yorkshire	18·30

Police force	Cost £ (excluding VAT)
Greater Manchester	17·43
Cheshire	18·97
Cumbria	15·00

Women Prisoners

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women gave birth while detained in prison in the United Kingdom according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988, 75 women in custody gave birth at outside hospitals.

Drug Offences

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last discussed with the Crown prosecution service the operation of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act.

Mr. John Patten: Home Office officials have frequent discussions with the Crown prosecution service about the operation of the Act. The most recent took place on 25 April.

Passport Controls (EC)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the legal basis of the powers under which European Community member states require nationals from other European Community states to produce a valid passport before permitting entry; and how this practice will be affected by the Single European Act.

Mr. Renton: Council directive 68/360/EEC requires member states to allow EC nationals who are exercising freedom of movement rights under the treaty of Rome to enter their territory simply on production of a valid identity card or passport. Other EC nationals entering the United Kingdom are required to produce on request a valid national passport or identity document by virtue of the Immigration Act 1971. Discussions within the Community on how effect should be given to the Single European Act in this area are still in progress, but it is the Government's present view that it will remain necessary to require EC nationals to produce on request a valid passport or identity document when entering the United Kingdom.

AIDS

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the prison service will make available the supplies recommended to prisoners in his new video on AIDS.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The videofilm "AIDS Inside and Out"' is part of a new educational resource package which aims to give prisoners essential information about AIDS and the human immunodeficiency virus. It advises how they can avoid risk to themselves and others not only while they are in custody but after their release. In the latter context the contribution which condoms can make to safer sexual practice is explained; and drug misusers are advised that if they cannot avoid injecting when they leave prison they should use only clean needles and never share injecting equipment.

Because of the special circumstances in prisons it would not be right to make drug injecting equipment available to prisoners for unsupervised use. Nor are we persuaded that it would be right to change the policy of not including condoms among the items which prisoners may have in their possession.

Police (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the extent to which the current police initial recruitment test is culturally biased to the detriment of applicants from an ethnic minority background.

Mr. Hurd: There is no evidence that the police initial recruitment test works to the detriment of applicants from the ethnic minorities. But the test may not be directed sufficiently closely to the abilities which police officers need to do the job. The case for replacing it is under consideration by the Police Advisory Board.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had discussions with the West Midlands police authority about the percentage of the costs of the inquiry being undertaken by its officers into the Hillsborough disaster to be borne by central funding.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) on 28 April 1989, at column *702*.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *406*, if any information about assaults on police officers on duty at Hillsborough has been collated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about assaults on police officers at Hillsborough on 15 April is being collated for the South Yorkshire police as part of the inquiry being carried out by the chief constable of the West Midlands police.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his reply of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *342*, in which he stated 19 police officers had so far been recorded as having received medical treatment for physical injuries sustained on duty at Hillsborough, he will state in each case how the physical injury was caused.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not yet possible to state how these injuries were caused. The inquiry by the chief constable of West Midlands police may cast further light on these matters.

Public Order

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been arrested and charged, during the last 12 months, under section 5 of the Public Order Act, for displaying a symbol representing a dove within the sight of person liable to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby; and what sentences were given in each case where a conviction was obtained.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: If the hon. Member has any incident in mind, I should be happy to investigate. It is not possible to identify from the available criminal statistics relating to prosecutions under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 the circumstances in which arrests were made.

Fire Service

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the pay and conditions of service of the fire service.

Mr. Hurd: The Government are fully committed to an effective fire service and to the nationally recommended standards of fire cover and in this context have been pursuing a policy of better value for money in the fire service for a number of years. The Audit Commission examined this in 1986 and made a number of suggestions for consideration. Some of these are being examined by a Home Office chaired working party under the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council machinery. Others relate to pay and conditions of service. On these, officials wrote on my behalf in May last year to the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades asking what steps it had taken with regard to the Audit Commission's findings and asking that the council should set up a working party with participation by officials from the Home Departments. This was not accepted. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State then met each of the member bodies of the council individually and discussed with them how matters should be taken forward. When he had completed this round of consultation, my right hon. and noble Friend wrote to the various organisations summarising the Government's position and asking that the council as a body should reconsider its view on my proposal that a working party should be set up. We await a reply.

Among the issues which I wish to see examined by the proposed working party are: the ban on whole-time firefighters serving in a retained capacity in their spare time; manning practices on public holidays; the Fire Brigades Union's ban on rostered overtime; and whether the present pay formula remains the best way of determining fire service pay for the future.

The Government are resolved to have these issues properly considered and our hope is that we can carry out this important exercise with all the member bodies of the national joint council who I hope will participate fully with a positive attitude and an open mind. I would like the proposed working party to make recommendations for the national joint council to address. If such co-operation were not forthcoming, the Government would have to come to their own view on the merits of the issues and, whilst I cannot speculate on what steps we would feel compelled to take, I cannot exclude the possibility of legislation if this appears necessary and justified.

WALES

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds were allocated from his Department for directly commissioned research elevant to mental handicap for each of the past five years; and whether he intends those funds to be increased over the next five to 10 years.

Mr. Grist: The principal research element of the all-Wales mental handicap strategy is the work of the mental handicap applied research unit, based at the university of Wales college of medicine, Cardiff and of the centre for social policy research and developmemt, based at the university college of north Wales, Bangor. These bodies have been supported over the period in question from the funds available to Wales from the Department of Health and Social Security's research and development budget, which has provided approximately £1,008,900 for their work over the last five years. Additional funding provided for research work directly by the Welsh Office over this period has been as follows: 1986-87—£10,600; 1987-88—£20,084; 1988-89—£1,815.

It is intended that provision for the two mental handicap research teams should continue so as to enable them to continue to assist in the development of the strategy. Allocation of specific funding for individual projects would be considered if it could be shown that research proposals of sufficient quality and relevance to the development of the strategy were required outside the work of the research teams.

Health Promotion Authority for Wales

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the budget of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales for each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88, expressed as actual expenditures and as a percentage of National Health Service expenditure in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales was not established until 1 April 1987. Its expenditure in 1987-88 was £1,295,000, which represents just over 0·1 per cent. of net National Health Service expenditure in Wales for that year.

Small Schools

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the definition of a small school for the purposes of Welsh Office circular 36/88.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As explained in paragraphs 109 and 110 of circular 36/88, there are two factors which may affect formula funding of small primary schools.

First, authorities' schemes of local management may allow, through the formula, for any additional costs of supporting the curriculum in small schools compared with larger schools. Schemes will need to be considered individually to ensure that a case for additional support exists. Accordingly, no advice has been given on size of school.

Second, LEAs' formulae may take account of the extent of variations between the actual teaching costs of some small schools and the LEA's average cost of employing teachers. In some small schools, it may be necessary to charge average rather than actual salaries, at least in the initial years of formula funding. Circular 36/88 does not set a precise limit on the size of school. Because the great majority of primary schools in Wales are relatively small, LEAs have been advised that actual teaching costs could be used for all primary schools.

Pre-school Education

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current percentage of children of pre-school age currently enrolled in state-run pre-school education in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of pre-school age children (excludes the rising fives) as at January 1988 is as follows:

Nursery or primary schools—68·8 per cent. of which: In nursery schools or nursery classes in primary schools—36·7 per cent.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Southendown, *(b)* Sandy Bay Porthcawl and *(c)* Swansea bay of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall, (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with EEC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Grist: The authority is currently reviewing its programme of remedial works which aims to achieve compliance of all listed water. The full cost of the programme has yet to be evaluated.

Forests

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the extent of die-back or other forms of ill-health in Welsh forests.

Mr. Peter Walker: Wales is included in the annual forest health surveys carried out by the Forestry Commission. The results of the 1987 survey were published in Forestry Commission bulletins Nos. 74 and 79, and the preliminary results of the 1988 survey were published in the Forestry Commission's research information note 139. Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House.

Trees (Pollution Damage)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has concerning the extent of pollution damage to trees adjacent to the Welsh water authority's Beacons reservoirs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I am not aware of any pollution damage to trees adjacent to the Welsh water authority's Beacons reservoirs. The green spruce aphid (Elatobium abietinum) has, however, increased in numbers as a result of the recent mild winters. It causes browning of spruce needles and defoliation, but does not affect new growth. Evidence of aphid attack is visible throughout Wales, particularly adjacent to the Beacons reservoirs, but I am assured by the Forestry Commission that the next cold winter should reduce aphid numbers to their normal levels.

Railways (Gwent)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will reply to the hon. Member for Newport, East concerning his letter dated 14 March, regarding rail matters affecting Gwent referred to in the *Official Report* on 1 March, column *304*.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 17 March.

Partnership (EC)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be replying to the hon. Member for Newport, East concerning his letter dated 2 March, regarding the partnership arrangement between the Welsh Office, the county councils and the EEC referred to in the *Official Report*, 1 March, column 345.

Mr. Peter Walker: I hope, as was indicated in the interim reply to the hon. Gentleman on 20 March, to reply shortly. In the interim, all local authorities involved in EC programmes have now been consulted on the EC plans relating to their areas, and the plans have now been formally submitted to the Commission.

Local Education Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much from each local education authority's capital allocation has been spent on the improvement or replacement of existing school buildings in each of the last five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* Local education authority capital expenditure on acquisition of land, existing buildings, new construction and works for the periods requested is given in the following table. Figures on improvement or replacement of existing school buildings are not collected separately.

Local authority capital expenditure on acquisition of land, existing buildings and works in respect of nursery, primary, secondary and special schools

£000

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Clwyd	3,118	3,231	3,833	4,507	5,200
Dyfed	3,898	2,957	2,432	3,382	5,281
Gwent	4,617	4,521	4,648	4,528	5,590
Gwynedd	1,132	1,210	1,704	1,576	2,083
Mid Glamorgan	5,521	5,183	2,871	4,251	5,939
Powys	1,555	1,067	475	1,961	1,739
South Glamorgan	1,334	1,945	1,384	2,138	1,893
West Glamorgan	2,840	2,206	3,191	3,677	4,738

Source: Capital Outturn Returns.

TRANSPORT

London Buses (Security)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish such information as may be in his possession about the proportion of buses in London which have video cameras installed in order to deter assaults on staff.

Mr. Portillo: I do not believe that it would be in the interest of crime prevention to publish this information.

Railway Inspectorate (Prosecutions)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* each occasion on which there was a prosecution by the railway inspectorate in each of the years 1980 to 1988 inclusive, *(b)* the defendant in each case, *(c)* the date of the first criminal proceedings in each case, *(d)* the court in which criminal proceedings commenced and *(e)* the outcome of the proceedings in each case.

Mr. Portillo: This information is given in the following table:

Prosecution in respect of	*Defendant*	*Date of first criminal proceedings*	*Court*	*Outcome*
Craigentinny, Edinburgh	(1) BRB	25 July 1982	Sheriff's Court, Edinburgh	(1) Guilty, fined £250
	(2) George Walls			(2) Guilty, fined £50
Denham Station	BRB employee	25 April 1983	Aylesbury Crown Court	Not guilty
West Cliff Lift	Bournemouth BC	24 November 1983	Bournemouth Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £750 plus £500 costs
Crofton	BRB	23 July 1984	Wakefield Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £300 plus £400 costs
Barking Station	(1) BRB	3 December 1984	Barking Magistrates Court	(1) Guilty, fined £1,000 plus £500 costs (BRB appealed successfully and costs awarded against HSE)
	(2) Fairbrother (employee)			(2) Case against Fairbrother withdrawn
Birmingham International	BRB employee	10 September 1984	Solihull Magistrates Court	Absolute discharge
Swann Carr Farm, Bradbury, Stockton on Tees	(1) Wm. R. Selwood Ltd.	25 July 1985	Darlington Magistrates Court	(1) Guilty, fined £300 plus £50 costs
	(2) BRB	12 November 1985		(2) Not guilty
West Cliff Lift	Bournemouth BC	25 January 1985	Bournemouth Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £2,000 plus £500 costs
Shields	(1) BRB (2) Two staff	Not known	Glasgow Sheriff Court	(1) Not guilty (2) Guilty, fined £150 plus £125 respectively
Leicester North Station	BRB	25 June 1985	Leicester Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £500 plus £250 costs
Coquet Viaduct	A. Monck & Co. Plc	23 September 1985	Alnwick Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £1,250 plus £1,100 costs
Bridgnorth Loco Workshops	Severn Valley Railway	8 July 1985	Bridgnorth Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £2,000 plus £150 costs
Glasgow Central Station	Camrex Corrosion Engineers	2 July 1985	Glasgow Sheriff Court	Company, which was in liquidation, received an admonition
Sunderland Station	BRB	8 August 1985	Sunderland Magistrates Court	Guilty, fined £1,500 plus £300 costs
Liverpool Street Station	London & Midland Scaffolding Ltd. Scaffolding Ltd. (Monks)	13 January 1987	Central Criminal Court	Guilty, fined £5,000 plus £900 costs
Etches Park, Derby	BRB employee	24 February 1987	Derby and South Derbyshire	Guilty, fined £500 plus £50 costs

Pisa Flight (Baggage)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate urgently the circumstances under which baggage belonging to passengers from Stoke North on Britannia flight BY5784 15.00 to Pisa on 26 March did not travel on the same aircraft as the passengers concerned; and if he will make a further statement about aircraft security.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This matter is being investigated. I shall write to the hon. Member when the conclusions are known.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies on 24 April by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) and for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith).

Severn Bridge (Toll Charges)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the report of Mr. J. B. Fitzpatrick, CBE, LLB, following the inquiry in Bristol into the proposal to double toll charges on the Severn bridge; and how long he will be considering its findings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This report has not been received.

Private Motor Cars

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South, 13 January, *Official Report*, column *800*, he will give the latest available figure of the estimated proportion of private motor cars using roads in the Greater London area whose costs are not met by the taxable income of their owners; and if he will state when the results of studies in hand on this and related topics will be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available. Results of the studies are expected early next year.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has set a new financial target for the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Channon: With the agreement of the Civil Aviation Authority, a new financial target of an average annual rate of return (current cost operating profit) before taking account of interest, of 8 per cent. on net assets revalued at current cost, has been set for the three-year period 1989-90 to 1991-92. The target applies only to one third of the authority's assets since en-route navigation service charges have, by international agreement, to break even and its subsidiary Highlands and Islands Airports Limited is subsidised by the Scottish Development Department.

Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what terms he has agreed to capital reconstruction of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: As part of the company's capital reorganisation proposals, I have agreed to waive the repayment of Government grants totalling £110 million and to cancel £1·5 million of Government loans. In exchange, the company accepts that it will no longer be eligible for support under the Ports (Financial Assistance) Act 1981 and that the Department's guarantee of its overdraft will cease. The Government's shares in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company will be voted in support of the board's proposal to capitalise the company's loan stock at the extraordinary general meeting on 30 May.

If the shareholders approve the capital reorganisation, I intend to sell the whole of the Government's current holding of company shares at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Following that, I shall relinquish the special share which empowers me to appoint up to three directors to the company's board.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Plastic Explosives

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the proposal made by the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Jaremir Johanes, inviting Her Majesty's Government to enjoin in a British-Czechoslovak initiative in the United Nations on the conclusion of a convention on the control of plastic explosives.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have kept in touch with the Czechoslovak Government since I first discussed this proposal at my meeting with Mr. Johanes on 10 January. A team of British officials visited Czechoslovakia on 26-27 April and held most useful discussions. I am arranging for a copy of a joint press statement following the talks to be deposited in the Library of the House.

Prisoners of War

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to request the Japanese Government to ratify the 1929 Geneva convention on the treatment of prisoners of war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. Japan signed but did not ratify the international convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war (Geneva, 27 July 1929), to which the hon. Gentleman refers. However, on 21 April 1953, she acceded to the Geneva convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war (Geneva, 12 August 1949), which replaced the 1929 convention.

Brazil

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Secretary General of the Brazilian Ministry of the Interior; and what was discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs did not meet the Secretary General during his visit in April, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development had very useful discussions with Dr. Mello, covering a wide range of environmental issues, including urban pollution and the future of the Amazon rain forests.

Common Foreign Policy (Europe)

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet colleagues from the Twelve to discuss political co-operation matters on 12-13 June in Luxembourg.

Security Studies

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been offered by Her Majesty's Government to the proposals by Mr. Rocard in regard to the establishment of a European institute of advanced security studies within the framework of the Western European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: This question is being considered by the WEU Permanent Council, which will then report to Ministers.

Ballistic Missile Control

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to institute an examination of effectiveness of the ballistic missile control regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: As a founder member of the missile technology control regime, it is our policy to ensure, in conjunction with our MTCR partners, that the regime operates effectively. To this end we keep the effectiveness of the regime under constant review.

Panama

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the preparations for the election in Panama on 7 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have noted recent reports quoting Opposition concerns at the use of fraud by the Government to manipulate the election results in favour of the Government coalition candidate. We would deplore any such tactics, and call upon the authorities in Panama to ensure that free and fair elections are held in accordance with established democratic principles; and to allow individuals from abroad to travel to Panama to observe the elections.

Mr. Arshad Iqbal

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mr. Arshad Iqbal is to be issued with a visa by the post in Islamabad to join his wife in the United Kingdom; when Mr. Iqbal's appeal, No. -TH/36030/87/6216, was upheld by the immigration appeal tribunal; and when the post was instructed to issue a visa to Mr. Iqbal.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to the reply 25 April 1989, c. 463]:* I am now replying in full rather than referring the case to the FCO correspondence unit, in the light of the circumstances of this case.

Mr. Arshad's appeal was upheld by the immigration appeal tribunal on 9 December 1988, and a copy of the determination was sent by the Home Office to the entry clearance officer at Islamabad on 10 January 1989. Unfortunately, it appears that no covering letter was attached to the determination, which was therefore filed away to await instructions. The Home Office is now taking steps to ensure in future that appropriate instructions are attached to all determinations sent to entry clearance officers.

The hon. Member will, however, be pleased to know that instructions were sent to Her Majesty's embassy, Islamabad on 24 April directing it to issue an entry clearance to Mr. Iqbal. I should be grateful if the hon. Member could kindly convey my apologies to Mr. Iqbal's family for any distress or inconvenience caused by the delay in acting on the tribunal's determination.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge

51. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to extend the 56-day deadline on the backdating of rebates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The Scottish community charge rebate scheme provides for claims made within 56 days of 1 April 1989, or of the date of receipt of the first community charge demand notice where this is later, to be treated as having been made on 1 April 1989, subject to certain prescribed conditions. The purpose of this provision is to help people at the outset of the scheme who may not realise that rebate cannot normally be awarded until it is claimed. The 56-day period allows sufficient time for the making of a claim, and we see no need for it to be extended. The scheme also provides for a claim to be backdated where the claimant can show good cause for not having claimed earlier.

Hostel Charges

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to review his Department's payments used to cover hostel charges.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of changes in benefit payments for hostel dwellers were announced to the House by my right hon. Friend on 16 March 1989 at columns *546-48*.

Doncaster and Mexborough Offices

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the present number of staff at his Department's offices in Doncaster and Mexborough; what was the number of vacancies at each of these offices on 31 March; what percentage this is of the formal complement; and what were the comparable figures five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

	Doncaster East	*Doncaster West*	*Mexborough NIO*
31 March 1989			
Staff in post	155	188	19
Complement	14	183	20
Vacancies	0	0	1

	Doncaster East	Doncaster West	Mexborough NIO
Per cent. of formal complement	—	—	5
31 March 1984 Staff in post	133	180	20
30 September 1979 Staff in post	148	212	36

Notes:
1. Records of Local Office complements and vacancies are no longer available for 1979 and 1984.
2. Staff in post figures for 31 March 1979 are not available; figures for 30 September 1979 have been provided.

Benefits

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, *Official Report*, 8 February, column *713*, if he will estimate the number of low-income families with children who are ineligible for either family credit or income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available.

Pensions

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate when he expects to publish a response to the Occupational Pensions Board report on protecting pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When my right hon. Friend published the Occupational Pensions Board report, "Protecting Pensions", he launched a consultation exercise and asked for comments to be received by 30 April. We are now considering the responses to the consultation exercise and will announce decisions in the light of the comments received.

Social Fund

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether independent research has been commissioned into the extent to which the social fund is meeting its objectives.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes. We have commissioned the social policy research unit at the university of York to carry out this research.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the total numbers and amounts of applications for the period 5 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, inclusive, in respect of *(a)* social fund community care grants, *(b)* social fund crisis loans and *(c)* social fund budgeting loans.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 April 1989]:* The information requested is set out as follows and is provisional:

	Community care grants	Budgeting loans	Crisis loans
Applications processed	296,149	867,571	468,232
Financial value (£ million)	79·029	267·437	26·899

Earnings Rule

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the abolition of the pensioner earnings rule will affect pensioners receiving income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Abolition of the pensioners earnings rule will affect pensioners currently having their basic pension reduced on account of earnings over £75 a week, those individuals currently deferring receipt of basic pension because of earnings over £75 a week and who may now choose to draw their pension, and those with earnings of under £75 a week who may now choose to earn more. Pensioners with earnings over £75 a week are unlikely to be entitled to income support.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Apples

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to investigate the effects of the apple crop spray known as Alar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides has advised Ministers responsible for the control of pesticides that there should be no changes to the approval of the pesticide, Daminozide. At its meeting on 20 April the advisory committee considered the information which had been submitted to the American authorities, and concluded that the use of Daminozide did not pose a health risk to consumers.

Ministers are grateful for the committee's willingness to consider the available data on a basis of such urgency, and have accepted the advice.

Monitoring will be continued to assess the occurrence of residues in apples and apple products sold in the United Kingdom.

Farming Policy

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to take steps to introduce a low-input low-output system of farming, on the lines of that introduced in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Ryder: The Community extensification scheme envisaged incentives to farmers for less-intensive production of a range of supported agricultural products. Now that the Council has adopted the relevant legislation—which, in particular, allows extensification to be applied on a pilot basis initially—I will be considering in consultation with the interests concerned what pilot schemes might be appropriate.

Bread and Wheat

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each year from 1979 to 1989 *(a)* the price of bread to the consumer and *(b)* the price of wheat to the producer, in actual and at 1979 prices, showing the percentage increase or decrease in each year.

Mr. Ryder: The price information requested for bread and wheat is set out in the table. Final figures for 1988 and

forecast figures for 1989 for wheat will not be available until published in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1989".

	Average price of standard white wrapped and sliced loaf (800g)				*[1]Weighted average price of United Kingdom wheat at point of sale*			
	Actual price		*[2]1979 price*		*Actual price*		*1979 price*	
	Pence per loaf	*Percentage change*	*Pence per loaf*	*Percentage change*	*£ per tonne*	*Percentage change*	*£ per tonne*	*Percentage change*
1979	29·3		29·3		95·92		95·92	
1980	33·7	15·0	28·2	−3·8	99·30	+3·5	82·96	−13·5
1981	36·3	7·7	27·2	−3·5	108·92	+9·7	81·65	−1·6
1982	37·1	2·2	25·8	−5·1	113·74	+4·4	79·21	−3·0
1983	37·6	1·3	24·9	−3·5	124·80	+9·7	82·70	+4·4
1984	38·5	2·4	24·4	−2·0	114·59	−8·2	72·57	−12·2
1985	40·2	4·4	24·1	−1·2	112·25	−2·0	67·26	−7·3
1986	43·0	7·0	24·9	3·3	111·18	−1·0	64·34	−4·3
1987	43·7	1·6	24·1	−3·2	111·00	−0·2	61·33	−4·7
1988	46·3	5·9	24·0	−0·4	[3]104·83	−5·6	54·32	−11·4
1989	[4]48·7	7·5						

Source: Bread prices: Employment Gazette.
Wheat prices: Annual Review of Agriculture, Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1988.
[1] The wheat prices quoted are net of co-responsibility levies.
[2] Using the gross domestic product deflator (at market prices).
[3] Forecast.
[4] January to March inclusive.

Game

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice his Department issues on the preparation of game for human consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The production of game meat in common with all other food sold for human consumption is subject to the provisions of Food Act 1984 and the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970. Enforcement is the responsibility of local authorities.

We were considering meat inspection provisions for deer when the EC Commission issued a consultation document on health rules for game meat. In advance of decisions in Brussels we have encouraged local authorities to introduce inspection procedures for farmed deer slaughtered in abattoirs. Officers of the state veterinary service are available to provide advice to producers and local authorities and they frequently do so.

Rendering (Exports)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantities of meat and bone meal were exported by the British rendering industry for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Exports of the British rendering industry are not separately identified within the statistics on the total exports of meat meal and bone meal. The figures on these for the last three years are as follows:

	Tonnes		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*
Flours, meals and pellets of meat or offal (including tankage), unfit for human consumption; greaves	10,001	12,299	13,228
Bone meal	3,902	5,061	[1]5,174

[1]From 1988, bone meal is combined in the statistics with other bones and their derivatives apart from "ossein and bones treated with acid". The tonnage of bone meal exported in 1988 could be around 2,000 tonnes lower than that shown.

Slaughterhouses (BSE)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now take steps to monitor and record the incidences of suspected bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases as between non-EEC export-approved slaughterhouses and EEC export-approved slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The numbers of suspect cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy which are identified at slaughterhouses, as part of the monitoring exercise to stop animals slipping through the net, are being recorded, but I have no plans to distinguish between EC export-approved abattoirs and others.

Radioactivity

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* those radioactive substances for which his Department carries out routine exploratory tests in coastline areas; where those sites are; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is published regularly by my Ministry in reports entitled "Radioactivity in surface and coastal waters of the British Isles", copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who will be the shareholders and in what percentage under the proposed management buy-out of Messrs Harland and Wolff in co-operation with Mr. Olsen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The shareholders in the proposed management buy-out of Harland and Wolff plc will consist of present management

and employees and Mr. Olsen through two of his companies. The issue of shares in the new company is a matter for those parties, but I understand that the precise allocation of shares in the new company has not yet been finally agreed.

DEFENCE

Mexe Raft Equipment

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to update the Mexe raft equipment.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no plans to modify the design of the Mexeflote equipment currently in service, which adequately meets Army requirements.

RAF

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what aircraft have been ordered by his Department for the RAF since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to table 5 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates for 1989" (Cm 675-I), published yesterday, which lists all major equipment ordered by my Department since 1979, including aircraft.

RN (Alcohol Consumption)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the limits placed on the alcohol consumption by ratings on board Royal Navy vessels.

Mr. Neubert: The limits are:

Warrant Officers and Senior Rates

(a) *Spirits*—An individual's spirit consumption may not exceed an average of one-eighth of a pint a day.

(b) *Beer*.

(i) *Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers*—There is no mandatory restrictions on consumption.

(ii) *Petty Officers*—An individual's daily consumption is not to exceed:

2 pints or 4 × 12 oz cans when at sea; in harbour when at four hours notice or less for sea; on duty in harbour, or required for duty as a watchkeeper.

4 pints or 8 × 12 oz cans when in harbour not on duty nor required for duty as a watchkeeper.

Junior Rates—Daily consumption of beer is not to exceed 3 × 12 oz cans.

These are maximum limits and are subject to any further restrictions laid down by commanding officers about the time and operating situation in which alcohol may be consumed.

Recruitment (Coventry)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has available as to the annual recruitment rate from Coventry into each of the armed services from 1970 to the latest date; and if he will break the figures down by service and by the age and gender of recruits.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to the hon. Member.

WEU (Defence Representations Group)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions the Defence Representations Group of the Western European Union has met; and if he will list those who have represented the United Kingdom at those meetings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Defence Representations Group of the Western European Union has met on 11 occasions since its formation in 1987. The United Kingdom has been led by a senior official from the Ministry of Defence (the level has varied from meeting to meeting) supported by other officials from the Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

US Aircraft (Crash)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the crash of a United States Air Force A10 aircraft at Bank farm, Benwick, on 17 April; and whether the aircraft was carrying weapons, including bombs.

Mr. Neubert: As I told the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 24 April at column *365* an A-10 aircraft crashed on 17 April 1989 during a routine training flight on open farmland one mile south of Benwick, Cambridgeshire. The pilot was killed. The aircraft was equipped with a GAU-7 anti-tank gun and practice ammunition.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct Her Majesty's chief inspector of pollution to conduct an immediate evaluation of sites at Moss valley, Wrexham; Lodmoor country park, Weymouth and Comeston country park, Barry, to ascertain if hazardous toxic industrial wastes have been disposed of safely.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The sites in Wales were covered in a study recently carried out by the Welsh Office. This study looked at some 94 sites in Wales which had been reclaimed from old industrial sites. The study, and copies, are available from the Welsh Office.

The Lodmoor site is adjacent to an active landfill site operated by Dorset county council. As both the operator of the site and as the waste disposal authority for the area it is its responsibility to ensure that the site is operated properly. According to the information held by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution the Lodmoor landfill does not accept toxic industrial wastes.

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much toxic waste was imported into the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on imports of toxic waste is currently held by the waste disposal authorities. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is in the process of collecting this information centrally. Figures will be available later this year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many of the 56 toxic waste disposal

sites in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, a potential danger from methane gas has been identified; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has been carrying out a postal survey of landfill sites which may need gas control measures to be installed or improved. Initially the survey set out to identify sites which may have the potential to give rise to landfill gas. The second phase was to identify sites which are giving off gas and what controls are either in place or are needed. This second phase is still under way and information is still being collected. It is not possible yet to say which particular sites in South Yorkshire are likely to require further action to be taken.

Doncaster district council is the responsible waste disposal authority which, together with South Yorkshire hazardous waste unit, should ensure that adequate control measures have been installed in accordance with waste management paper No. 27—guidance recently issued by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether individuals holding identity cards will be able to check the information stored on the soccer identity card computer system;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that information fed into the national computer system on soccer identity cards will not be released to mail order and similar companies;

(3) what steps he is taking to safeguard information fed into the national computer system on soccer identity cards from being misused.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government intend that members of the scheme and applicants to it should have the full protection of the Data Protection Act 1984. This will be in relation to the collection of information to be held, access to it and the use to which such information is put. Discussions with the data protection registrar on these matters have taken place and will continue as the scheme is drawn up by the football membership authority.

Support Grades

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, with respect to the support grades in his Department *(a)* what is the number of staff employed, *(b)* how many vacancies there are and how many of these have existed for over one month and over three months, *(c)* how many temporary and casual appointments there are and *(d)* how much overtime was worked by them in London and elsewhere.

Mr. Ridley: The support grades in my Department mainly comprise staff from the messenger, reprographics and paperkeeping groups, cleaners and office keepers. For my Department, including the Property Services Agency, the information as at 1 April 1989 is:

(a) there were 856 staff in these grades;

(b) there were 38 vacancies. Nineteen had been vacant for over one month, 13 of them for over three months;

(c) vacancies were covered by casual staff when they arose. Casual staff are recruited locally and no central record is kept.

My Department and the Department of Transport shared common citizenship until 31 March 1989. Average overtime worked by the two Departments was 6·4 hours in London headquarters and 1¼ hours in regional offices. In PSA the average was 3·1 hours in London and 3·6 hours elsewhere.

Community Charge

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in which month he expects his consideration of collective local community charge registration and payment statistics to be completed and to be publicly announced.

Mr. Gummer: I shall announce my conclusions as soon as possible.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what indicative figures for the likely level of community charge in the city of Nottingham have been given by his Department over the last two years giving the date and criteria used in each case.

Mr. Gummer: The Department has not published any forecasts of the likely level of community charge in Nottingham. We have published illustrative figures based on reported expenditure levels for 1987-88 and 1988-89 and on local authority responsibilities in those years. These were placed in the Library on 29 June 1987 and 24 June 1988, respectively. Both were accompanied by a full explanation of the assumptions used to produce the figures.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the orders and regulations concerning the implementation of the community charge *(a)* laid before and agreed to by the House. *(b)* laid before, but not yet agreed to by the House and *(c)* yet to be laid before the House giving in each case an outline of the area of implementation affected.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The following negative resolution instruments concerning the community charge were laid on 17 March 1989:

1989 No. 438—The Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989. These regulations (apart from regulations 4 and 5) came into force on 7 April 1989. Regulations 4 and 5 come into force on 22 May 1989.

1989 No. 439—The Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals Regulations 1989. These regulations (apart for the purposes of regulations 4 to 8 and 11) came into force on 7 April 1989. Regulations 4 to 8 came into force on 1 May 1989.

1989 No. 440—The Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations 1989. These regulations came into force on 1 May 1989.

1989 No. 442—The Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order 1989. This order came into force on 7 April 1989.

1989 No. 443—The Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989. These regulations are coming into force on 1 October 1989.

A debate on these regulations is being arranged through the usual channels.

We intend to lay further regulations on the community charge covering cross border information, the form of the community charge demand note, and the information to accompany it, discounts, co-owners and other miscellaneous provisions.

Ark

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek a meeting with the organisers of the new environmentalist group, Ark to discuss environmental matters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no present plans to do so.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ealing, North of 4 April, *Official Report*, columns 151-2, when he expects the Housing Corporation to supply the information referred to in that answer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Housing Corporation is currently assembling the information needed to answer my hon. Friend's question and expects to respond by Friday 5 May.

Caravan Sites Act

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received about the future of the Caravan Sites Act.

Mr. Trippier: I receive various letters, from hon. Members and the public, about the Act. The Government announced their conclusions on a review of its operation on 6 February 1987.

Inner-city Developments (Signs)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the size of signs erected on inner-city developments promoting the Government's involvement; how many such signs have been erected; how much has been spent on erecting the signs; and for what purpose the signs have been erected.

Mr. Trippier: The Department provides two sizes of signs, 8 ft by 2 ft and 4 ft by 1 ft. Since November 1987, 4,452 signs have been produced at a cost of £15,204 of which 2,864 have been issued to local authorities and other recipients of the Department's financial assistance through the urban programme, derelict land grant, estate action and urban development grant/city grant. Records are not kept of the number and cost of signs erected.

House Building

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the number of new housing starts in each region in February 1989, and February 1988, together with the percentage change in starts.

Mr. Trippier: Since monthly housebuilding figures are very variable it is advisable to consider data over three-month periods. Housebuilding starts for the regions in England in the three months to February 1989 and the corresponding period a year earlier are given in the table.

Housebuilding starts in thousands

	December 1987 to February 1988	*December 1988 to February 1989*	*Percentage change*
North	1·6	2·6	+68
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·6	4·2	+18
East Midlands	4·5	4·3	−5
East Anglia	3·5	3·1	−10
South East:			
Greater London	4·2	4·0	−5
Rest of south east	12·5	12·2	−3
South West	6·8	5·8	−15
West Midlands	4·3	3·9	−9
North West	3·9	4·9	+24
ENGLAND	44·9	45·0	—

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Norfolk)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest in Norfolk have been damaged in the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that over the past five years, out of a total of 129 sites of special scientific interest in Norfolk, 23 have sustained some damage to relatively small areas.

Grant-related Expenditure

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make available his Department's publications, "Grant-Related Expenditure 1989-90" and the "Technical Handbook of Grant-Related Expenditure, 1989-90".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will place copies of these documents in the Library of the House. Copies have also been sent to every local authority in England, and to the local authority associations.

Industrial Chemicals

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the systematic evaluation of the possible harmful effects of industrial chemicals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department and the Welsh Office have recently published a consultation paper proposing that additional statutory powers should be introduced to evaluate and control the environmental hazard of existing chemicals. The consultation paper describes the powers available under existing legislation and proposes additional powers to obtain information about substances with the potential to cause environmental damage, to require testing when adequate information

is not available, and to control the supply, storage or use of such substances when necessary. Interested organisations and individuals are invited to send their views to the Department or the Welsh Office by 15 June 1989.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I have today placed in the Library a table showing the major publicity campaigns undertaken by my Department since 1985-86, with intended objectives for all campaigns including those planned for 1989-90. A campaign would be required to publicise the offers of sale of the water authorities; this is still to be planned.

Tropical Hardwoods

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to refuse planning permission for landscape work using unrenewable tropical hardwoods.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* No. The planning system is not the proper means for regulating the choice and use of materials other than on land-use grounds.

Freemasonry

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that freemasonry does not exert secret influence in local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The national code of local government conduct contains provisions aimed at such matters. We have set up a working group with the local authority associations to review the code, which will be given statutory status by the Local Government and Housing Bill. This will, no doubt, be one of the problems to be considered by the group.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in relation to the Crown Suppliers' context range of furniture, if he will provide *(a)* the initial forecast sales, *(b)* the actual sales since its introduction and *(c)* the estimated sale value of the amount currently unsold in store.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 April 1989]:* The Crown Suppliers forecasts of sale for individual ranges are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential. But in the eight months since the range was launched, sales have totalled £0·52 million and negotiations are in hand to sell a further £1 million worth. The estimated sales value of stock currently held in store is £1·6 million.

Personal Social Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing the per capita costs, for each shire county and each metropolitan borough, of spending on personal social services, in the year 1987-88.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer, 26 April 1989]:* The information based on returns made by local authorities is as follows:

Net current expenditure per capita on personal services—1987-88:

Shire counties	£
Avon	55·92
Bedfordshire	48·59
Berkshire	47·47
Buckinghamshire	47·44
Cambridgeshire	47·01
Cheshire	51·14
Cleveland	63·55
Cornwall	42·87
Cumbria	51·76
Derbyshire	63·74
Devon	43·01
Dorset	37·92
Durham	46·68
East Sussex	49·57
Essex	44·30
Gloucestershire	43·24
Hampshire	37·65
Hereford and Worcester	41·48
Hertfordshire	43·88
Humberside	59·37
Isle of Wight	49·82
Kent	43·36
Lancashire	58·13
Leicestershire	50·91
Lincolnshire	42·08
Norfolk	40·71
Northamptonshire	50·25
Northumberland	52·25
North Yorkshire	40·62
Nottinghamshire	63·79
Oxfordshire	44·78
Shropshire	38·40
Somerset	42·71
Staffordshire	39·37
Suffolk	37·55
Surrey	35·03
Warwickshire	45·15
West Sussex	39·05
Wiltshire	43·10

Net current expenditure per capita on personal social services 1987-88: Metropolitan districts

	£
Bolton	56·17
Bury	58·48
Manchester	130·61
Oldham	68·14
Rochdale	86·51
Salford	76·37
Stockport	54·16
Tameside	78·00
Trafford	49·59
Wigan	55·83
Knowsley	66·92
Liverpool	84·46
St. Helens	63·96
Sefton	54·65
Wirral	64·52
Barnsley	53·84
Doncaster	51·89
Rotherham	58·58
Sheffield	85·31

	£
Gateshead	70·09
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	98·85
North Tyneside	88·42
South Tyneside	70·72
Sunderland	67·93
Birmingham	79·37
Coventry	84·57
Dudley	48·26
Sandwell	66·90
Solihull	46·77
Walsall	55·50
Wolverhampton	82·87
Bradford	83·09
Calderdale	64·23
Kirklees	59·50
Leeds	68·32
Wakefield	57·50

Net current expenditure per capita on personal social services—1987-88: London boroughs

	£
City of London	386·59
Camden	195·41
Greenwich	139·29
Hackney	214·47
Hammersmith and Fulham	165·00
Islington	234·32
Kensington and Chelsea	150·86
Lambeth	204·15
Lewisham	180·60
Southwark	190·15
Tower Hamlets	136·03
Wandsworth	151·98
Westminster	185·59
Barking and Dagenham	74·23
Barnet	63·99
Bexley	55·32
Brent	141·95
Bromley	52·46
Croydon	68·72
Ealing	88·26
Enfield	71·07
Haringey	161·87
Harrow	62·99
Havering	57·13
Hillingdon	87·44
Hounslow	91·34
Kingston-upon-Thames	79·67
Merton	80·85
Newham	113·25
Redbridge	63·96
Richmond-upon-Thames	68·26
Sutton	59·24
Waltham Forest	117·01

Somerset Levels and Moors

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of *(a)* lump sum and *(b)* annual management agreements concluded between the Nature Conservancy Council and owners and occupiers of the area known as the Somerset Levels and Moors, the area of land involved and the total cost of agreements to the end of January 1989in 1989 prices.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that 184 agreements have been concluded with owners and occupiers of the Somerset Levels and Moors, covering an area of 1,968 hectares. These provide for annual payments totalling £281,685 per annum, as at January 1989.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those areas in the Somerset Levels and Moors which have been notified as sites of special scientific interest, indicating *(a)* where the Nature Conservancy Council owns land, and *(b)* the number of management agreements reached with owners and occupiers of each area so notified.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 26 April 1989]: The information requested is as follows:*

SSSI Name	*Number of Agreements*
West Sedgemoor[1]	24
Tealham and Tadham Moors[1]	35
Southlake Moor[1]	18
Moorlinch[1]	11
King's Sedgemoor	43
Wet Moor	5
West Moor	4
Westhay Moor[1]	1
Catcott, Edington and Chilton Moors[1]	31
North Moor	11
Shapwick Heath[1]	1
Sharpham Moor Plot	—
Street Heath	—
	184

[1] Includes land owned by NCC

North-east Hampshire structure plan

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce his decisions on the proposed alterations to the north-east Hampshire structure plan.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* I will send my proposed modifications to the submitted alteration to Hampshire county council as soon as possible.

Population Movements (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the numbers of people who have moved *(a)* into and *(b)* out of each district authority area in the county of South Yorkshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The table gives the numbers moving *(a)* into and *(b)* out of each district of the county of South Yorkshire from/to the rest of the United Kingdom, for the years 1979 to 1987. These figures have been derived from the National Health Service central register recording of patient re-registration with doctors involving a change of family practitioner committee.

In preparing population estimates of the district, account is also taken of migration from countries outide the United Kingdom and of the effect of movement of United Kingdom and foreign armed forces. Such flows in each direction are small and only the net effect is estimated using data from various sources.

Moves into and out of family practitioner committees (districts) in South Yorkshire

Year	Barnsley		Doncaster		Rotherham		Sheffield	
	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out
1979	3,880	3,880	6,290	6,640	5,770	5,100	12,710	14,670
1980	4,110	4,010	6,710	6,590	5,570	5,110	13,390	14,560
1981	3,840	4,040	5,620	6,140	5,100	5,170	13,040	13,190
1982	2,350	3,600	5,570	6,630	4,640	5,410	13,310	13,340
1983	3,390	4,480	5,630	7,180	4,700	5,790	12,170	14,360
1984	3,575	4,346	6,265	7,054	4,941	5,790	13,057	14,649
1985	3,321	4,548	5,868	7,033	4,666	5,894	12,598	15,288
1986	3,882	5,219	6,973	7,852	5,713	6,878	13,896	17,327
1987	4,222	5,166	7,349	7,898	5,782	6,596	14,518	16,864

Note: Numbers in the table are National Health Service central register records of moves into and out of family practitioner committee areas (conterminous with districts in the county of South Yorkshire) from rest of the United Kingdom. Data are based on a 10 per cent. sample for the years 1979 to 1983 and a 100 per cent. count thereafter.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Consultants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what percentage of internal training for employees within his Department was carried out by private sector training consultants in each of the last five years; and what was the cost to his Department in each of those years;

(2) what percentage of training under his Department's human resources development strategy has been carried out by private sector training consultants; what private sector companies are involved; and what fees have been paid by his Department in each case;

(3) if he will list all firms providing training consultancy services for his Department in each of the last five years; and what fees were paid to each company in each of the years.

Mr. Cope: This information is not collected in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what method of assessment of quality of service provided is used when his Department awards private sector training consultancies.

Mr. Cope: Quality is assessed by departmental tutors attending training events delivered by training consultants, and by comments and feedback through structured questionnaires completed by trainees and their line managers.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what method of tendering is used by his Department when selecting private sector training consultants.

Mr. Cope: Appointment of private sector training consultants is made on the basis of competitive tender within the guidelines applicable to Civil Service departments generally.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claims for unemployment benefit have been received, since the increase in the maximum number of weeks' suspension of unemployment benefit from 13 weeks to 26 weeks, at unemployment benefit offices in *(a)* Doncaster, and *(b)* Mexborough; and what were the comparable figures for the period April 1987 to April 1988.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the total inflow to the claimant count at unemployment benefit offices in Doncaster and Mexborough in the 11 months to March 1989. Figures for the year to April 1988 are not currently available analysed according to unemployment benefit office, as suitable computer programmes have only recently been developed.

Inflow of unemployed claimants at Doncaster and Mexborough unemployment benefit offices

UBO	May 1988 to March 1989
Doncaster A	5,949
Doncaster B	5,454
Doncaster C	5,242
Mexborough	4,226

Coal Dust Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made with the development of the optical scattering instantaneous respirable dust indicating system to reduce coal dust pollution in mines.

Mr. Nicholls: The laboratory development of the optical scattering instantaneous respirable dust indicating system (OSIRIS) by the Health and Safety Executive is complete. The technology has been transferred to industry through the British Technology Group and the system is now available commercially. The only continuing HSE involvement is provision of technical advice to licensees.

HEALTH

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses and midwives were employed in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1959, expressed in terms of whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

National Health Service hospital nursing and midwifery staff at 30 September each year
Whole-time equivalents

Year	England and Wales	England
1959	196,000	—
1960	197,900	—
1961	198,900	—
1962	205,300	—
1963	207,700	—
1964	212,400	—
1965	222,400	—
1966	231,500	—
1967	239,300	—
1968	241,300	—
1969	245,900	—
1970	252,800	—
1971	263,500	256,100
1972	—	272,500
1973	—	276,400
1974	—	281,300
1975	—	304,600
1976	—	306,200
1977	—	306,300
1978	—	313,000
1979	—	319,300
1980	—	330,200
1981	—	347,700
1982	—	351,900
1983	—	350,500
1984	—	350,400
1985	—	352,500
1986	—	354,700
1987	—	356,100

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of National Health Service non-medical manpower.

Notes:

1. Includes qualified nurses and midwives, learners and unqualified nursing staff.
2. The England and Wales figures are based on a slightly different definition to those for England. In addition, because of changes and improvements in the collection and processing of the data between 1959 and 1987 the information is not strictly comparable. England only figures are not available prior to 1971.
3. The figures have not been adjusted for changes in the working week introduced over the period shown.
4. Figures rounded to the nearest 100 whole-time equivalents.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for the latest available year, the total number of hospital beds in each district health authority in England for each of the following service: *(a)* general medical services, *(b)* general surgical services, *(c)* all non-psychiatric acute services, *(d)* geriatrics, *(e)* maternity, *(f)* mental illness, *(g)* mental handicap and *(h)* all hospital beds.

Mr. Mellor: The available information for England is given in the table.

Average daily available beds by ward type, by District Health Authority, 1987-88

District Health Authority	[1] Acute	General patients elderly	Maternity	Mental illness	[2] Mental handicap	[2] Total
Northern						
Hartlepool	342	158	58	84	0	642
North Tees	429	183	76	142	39	869
South Tees	1,019	320	116	314	0	1,768
East Cumbria	540	276	58	590	0	1,465
South Cumbria	390	291	59	65	5	810
West Cumbria	312	207	53	118	246	935
Darlington	413	163	46	17	380	1,019
Durham	447	235	52	77	265	1,075
North West Durham	339	171	35	51	0	596
South West Durham	308	216	63	1,005	22	1,614
Northumberland	654	341	97	751	1,533	3,376
Gateshead	467	236	64	528	0	1,295
Newcastle	1,935	489	142	629	0	3,195
North Tyneside	398	209	60	14	0	680
South Tyneside	378	173	58	138	69	816
Sunderland	1,082	408	116	681	27	2,315
Yorkshire						
Hull	1,012	264	68	11	473	1,827
East Yorkshire	481	236	66	673	0	1,455
Grimsby	450	224	65	43	132	914
Scunthorpe	399	235	58	53	115	859
Northallerton	260	81	32	0	36	408
York	691	324	82	750	218	2,066
Scarborough	351	177	45	49	0	621
Harrogate	501	210	59	47	94	910
Bradford	1,129	436	185	218	363	2,330
Airedale	425	226	72	449	78	1,250
Calderdale	472	310	92	179	91	1,144
Huddersfield	445	339	52	813	45	1,693
Dewsbury	394	230	84	0	0	708
Leeds Western	1,338	507	112	852	0	2,809
Leeds Eastern	1,235	412	142	155	460	2,404
Wakefield	584	170	56	741	259	1,810
Pontefract	373	241	59	154	0	827
Trent						
North Derbyshire	579	390	82	232	372	1,655

District Health Authority	[1] Acute	General patients elderly	Maternity	Mental illness	[2] Mental handicap	[3] Total
Southern Derbyshire	1,080	548	138	1,057	398	3,221
Leicestershire	1,865	844	299	1,149	640	4,796
North Lincolnshire	763	293	68	459	195	1,778
South Lincolnshire	638	315	95	414	211	1,672
Bassetlaw	217	131	30	82	20	480
Central Nottinghamshire	757	315	89	149	257	1,567
Nottingham	1,729	609	271	965	98	3,671
Barnsley	524	269	56	202	60	1,110
Doncaster	738	310	103	290	239	1,681
Rotherham	567	265	67	207	152	1,258
Sheffield	2,279	827	218	966	389	4,679
East Anglian						
Cambridge	769	324	94	409	185	1,781
Peterborough	633	230	106	115	64	1,148
West Suffolk	551	310	86	128	153	1,227
East Suffolk	785	539	96	691	154	2,265
Norwich	1,350	560	107	847	544	3,408
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	509	214	56	168	77	1,024
West Norfolk and Wisbech	380	253	59	137	42	871
Huntingdon	295	108	40	15	0	458
North West Thames						
North Bedfordshire	493	245	45	68	298	1,149
South Bedfordshire	484	196	92	733	26	1,531
North Hertfordshire	411	228	76	71	0	786
East Hertfordshire	366	194	54	95	0	709
North West Hertfordshire	437	256	54	397	2,686	3,830
South West Hertfordshire	362	229	75	53	0	719
Barnet	672	552	103	840	0	2,167
Harrow	487	158	89	86	0	819
Hillingdon	830	266	71	54	0	1,221
Hounslow and Spelthorne	759	219	118	157	0	1,254
Ealing	353	163	55	835	0	1,405
Brent	378	270	56	846	89	1,639
Paddington and North Kensington	749	139	55	108	11	1,062
Riverside	1,220	272	82	1,255	0	2,829
North East Thames						
Basildon and Thurrock	642	270	120	134	637	1,802
Mid Essex	628	356	92	55	247	1,377
North East Essex	579	352	82	628	529	2,170
West Essex	575	283	73	154	81	1,167
Southend	592	302	86	620	0	1,600
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,206	516	98	767	132	2,719
Hampstead	599	129	60	878	0	1,666
Bloomsbury	1,468	102	85	157	0	1,812
Islington	458	224	77	81	0	839
City and Hackney	1,161	72	105	148	0	1,485
Newham	474	280	87	6	29	877
Tower Hamlets	767	231	88	156	0	1,242
Enfield	432	271	86	128	73	990
Haringey	581	242	102	68	7	1,001
Redbridge	391	258	78	705	14	1,446
Waltham Forest	626	372	67	888	223	2,176
South East Thames						
Brighton	919	334	61	164	43	1,521
Eastbourne	518	273	52	321	99	1,262
Hastings	380	270	62	46	101	859
South East Kent	606	319	79	50	29	1,083
Canterbury and Thanet	774	301	99	644	156	1,975
Dartford and Gravesham	548	188	88	394	391	1,608
Maidstone	355	158	116	686	32	1,346
Medway	575	238	107	55	20	996
Tunbridge Wells	717	246	64	79	584	1,689
Bexley	302	177	82	738	0	1,299
Greenwich	797	244	90	69	49	1,249
Bromley	570	234	64	691	119	1,677
West Lambeth	744	135	89	747	0	1,715
Camberwell	862	189	93	98	0	1,242
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,092	230	103	155	138	1,718
South West Thames						
North West Surrey	478	167	75	192	620	1,532

District Health Authority	[1] Acute	General patients elderly	Maternity	Mental illness	[2] Mental handicap	[2] Total
West Surrey and North East Hants	398	235	35	80	172	920
South West Surrey	580	170	27	710	0	1,487
Mid Surrey	395	150	55	716	740	2,054
East Surrey	375	209	39	557	617	1,797
Chichester	435	92	47	461	54	1,088
Mid Downs	457	242	77	497	282	1,554
Worthing	477	420	33	29	44	1,003
Croydon	660	298	74	447	878	2,356
Kingston and Esher	454	154	26	708	0	1,342
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	385	224	37	15	172	834
Wandsworth	954	188	65	832	37	2,075
Merton and Sutton	710	284	105	174	825	2,098
Wessex						
East Dorset	1,085	658	153	235	0	2,132
West Dorset	405	249	96	252	166	1,168
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	1,023	440	146	370	354	2,332
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,246	318	150	599	400	2,712
Winchester	399	233	66	55	0	753
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	472	182	44	554	0	1,251
Salisbury	455	174	47	223	0	899
Swindon	501	229	79	58	275	1,143
Bath	1,015	578	139	596	32	2,360
Isle of Wight	296	143	36	105	11	591
Oxford						
East Berkshire	690	235	107	149	315	1,495
West Berkshire	897	290	129	436	451	2,203
Aylesbury Vale	548	132	47	372	184	1,283
Wycombe	400	237	65	34	3	738
Milton Keynes	253	88	65	42	0	448
Kettering	431	294	61	129	11	925
Northampton	669	302	76	398	297	1,742
Oxfordshire	1,390	478	196	441	247	2,751
South Western						
Bristol and Weston	1,137	193	135	304	244	2,012
Frenchay	533	406	12	475	867	2,293
Southmead	573	89	110	55	651	1,477
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	793	454	113	746	217	2,322
Exeter	1,050	398	80	450	259	2,236
North Devon	335	201	41	109	26	712
Plymouth	1,125	451	133	348	30	2,087
Torbay	675	270	54	166	14	1,179
Cheltenham	515	301	45	4	34	899
Gloucester	817	285	119	627	130	1,978
Somerset	1,151	440	128	909	323	2,951
West Midlands						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	388	108	51	351	0	898
Herefordshire	450	180	44	186	75	935
Kidderminster and District	225	138	24	77	368	832
Worcester and District	492	246	65	331	0	1,134
Shropshire	1,096	492	145	409	2	2,144
Mid Staffordshire	440	239	66	445	0	1,189
North Staffordshire	1,181	656	179	778	490	3,283
South East Staffordshire	500	391	68	735	0	1,694
Rugby	142	49	23	0	0	213
North Warwickshire	313	119	71	30	557	1,090
South Warwickshire	592	277	54	438	255	1,615
Central Birmingham	1,072	224	125	199	0	1,619
East Birmingham	668	194	0	0	0	862
North Birmingham	350	137	88	476	0	1,050
South Birmingham	879	388	73	361	363	2,063
West Birmingham	760	494	90	540	0	1,884
Coventry	881	343	125	277	0	1,626
Dudley	803	327	89	153	155	1,527
Sandwell	521	260	73	17	0	871
Solihull	248	97	117	329	134	925
Walsall	420	313	66	14	649	1,463
Wolverhampton	760	335	126	208	0	1,429
Mersey						
Chester	438	265	90	667	89	1,548
Crewe	435	310	75	231	427	1,479

District Health Authority	[1] Acute	General patients elderly	Maternity	Mental illness	[2] Mental handicap	[2] Total
Walton	142	132	0	70	42	386
Macclesfield	259	274	35	609	222	1,399
Warrington	473	186	70	1,066	385	2,180
Liverpool	1,878	525	202	321	134	3,060
St. Helens and Knowsley	615	281	102	1,075	0	2,073
Southport and Formby	334	209	33	137	289	1,002
South Sefton	1,079	296	90	181	0	1,647
Wirral	1,000	432	109	288	52	1,880
North Western						
Lancaster	414	201	49	658	499	1,821
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	844	351	89	346	0	1,630
Preston	975	130	94	881	0	2,079
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	691	318	124	183	0	1,315
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	612	286	70	262	1,986	3,216
West Lancashire	464	133	34	93	10	735
Chorley and South Ribble	59	159	26	78	1	323
Bolton	562	354	108	230	0	1,254
Bury	401	203	67	117	0	788
North Manchester	923	285	89	351	0	1,648
Central Manchester	872	162	119	85	0	1,238
South Manchester	1,327	403	140	243	0	2,112
Oldham	452	248	86	208	0	993
Rochdale	404	193	48	120	0	765
Salford	899	325	81	1,115	85	2,506
Stockport	735	474	100	279	105	1,693
Tameside and Glossop	431	307	81	162	0	982
Trafford	324	219	39	173	0	755
Wigan	697	379	103	291	0	1,469
Special Health Authorities						
The Hospitals for Sick Children	409	0	0	6	0	415
The National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	264	0	0	8	0	272
Moorfields Eye Hospital	149	0	0	0	0	149
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	52	0	0	411	21	484
The National Heart and Chest Hospitals	413	0	0	0	0	413
The Royal Marsden Hospital	327	0	0	0	0	327
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	518	128	154	0	0	800
The Eastman Dental Hospital	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1] Wards for general patients, excluding elderly, younger physically disabled, neonate cots not in maternity units.
[2] Excludes mental handicap community units.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reviews he is planning to ensure that all private hospitals have an expert ethical and oversight committee; and if he will ensure that there is no malpractice in respect of donor operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is for the medical profession itself, and in particular the General Medical Council to lay down ethical guidance and to ensure that it is followed. Such guidance applies equally to private practice as to the National Health Service. Under the recently introduced Human Organ Transplants Bill, regulations will specify conditions which must be satisfied before transplantation can take place of an organ from a living person who is not a close natural relative of the recipient.

Drug Abuse

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated by his Department in respect of health education in relation to drug abuse in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: Expenditure by the Department on drug misuse was as follows:

	£'000s
1986-87	1,707
1987-88	[1]5,419
1988-89	1,918

[1] Includes major joint drugs misuse/AIDS anti-injecting campaign

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat; if he will give for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein; and if he will express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not readily available in the form requested, but I will write to the hon. Member when it has been assembled.

Halton DHA

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the rate of patients receiving *(a)* hip replacements and *(b)* cataract operations (i) nationally and (ii) in Halton district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated numbers of *(a)* total hip replacements and other arthroplasy of hip and *(b)* eye lens operations per 10,000 population in England in 1986 (the latest year for which the information is available centrally) were 8·7 and 13·5 respectively. We do not yet have available centrally the rates of these operations for individual authorities. Such operations for residents of the Halton district health authority are available only in proximate districts.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the elderly *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Halton district health authority are seen by a district nurse on a regular basis.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information precisely in the form requested. Information is available centrally on the proportion of the elderly treated at all by a district nurse and is given in the table. We do not have information centrally on what proportion are seen by a district nurse on a regular basis.

District nursing: 1987-88
Persons treated (first treatment) during the year
Percentage of elderly population treated

Percentage

	England	*Halton district health authority*
Persons aged 65 and over	22·1	31·0

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on trends in death and discharges per bed in general medicine and general surgery and urology in the Halton district health authority area.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table.

Discharges and deaths per available bed, Halton district health authority

Specialty	*1985*	*1986*
General medicine	25·0	35·6
General surgery	29·8	45·0
Neurology	n/a	n/a

n/a = Not applicable.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on neonatal mortality and perinatal mortality rates in the area of Halton district health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The latest available annual rates are shown in the table.

Perinatal[1] and neonatal[2] mortality rates, Halton DHA, 1987

	Persons
Perinatal	10·7
Neonatal	5·4

[1] Deaths in the first week of life plus stillbirths per 1,000 live and stillbirths

[2] Deaths at ages 0-27 completed days of life per 1,000 livebirths.

Toxoplasmosis

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether screening for pregnant women is to be introduced for toxoplasmosis.

Mr. Mellor: I have nothing to add to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 21 March at column *576*.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated in National Health Service hospitals as in-patient, out-patient and day patient in the north-west in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures for 1978.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table.

National Health Service Hospitals activity, North Western Regional Health Authority, 1978, 1986 and financial year 1987-88

	1978	*1987-88*	*Percentage change between 1978-1987-88*
In-patient cases treated	511,674	644,540	26·0
Day case treated	68,080	120,400	76·9
New out patients	707,676	780,283	10·3
Total out-patient attendances	3,149,423	3,605,422	14·5
Ward attenders[1]	n/a	42,548	—

[1] This new category of patient was introduced in 1987-88. Some patients previously classified as out-patients or day cases may now be classified as ward attenders.

Eye Tests and Dental Examinations (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will update the figures on the number of eye tests and dental examinations in the Nottingham health authority area, provided in his answer of 12 April 1988, *Official Report*, column *115*.

Mr. Mellor: I assume that as before, the hon. Member is referring to eye tests which have been carried out under the general ophthalmic services and dental examinations under the general dental service. These are the responsibility of the family practitioner committee. The table gives the latest figures available for Nottingham family practitioner committee which includes the area covered by Nottingham health authority.

Nottingham Family Practitioner Committee

Year	*Number of eye tests*[1]	*Number of dental examinations*
1979	n.a	500,900
1980	n.a	538,660
1981	n.a	570,690
1982	n.a	591,490
1983	180,578	591,810
1984	195,150	618,580
1985	199,724	635,560
1986	206,524	[2]652,660
1987	221,955	[2]651,480
1988	[3]254,825	n.a

[1] Information is not available on eye tests before 1983.

[2] The Dental Estimates Board altered its collection of statistics from calendar year to financial year as from 1986-87 and these figures relate to the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 respectively.

[3] The Ophthalmic Section of the Department of Health's Statistics and Management Information Division altered its collection of statistics from calendar year to financial year as from 1988-89 and this figure relates to the financial year 1988-89.

Gluten-free Products

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there has been any change in his Department's guidelines to doctors concerning the National Health Service prescription of gluten-free products for coeliacs and people with dermatitis herpeti-formis; and what measures he is taking to correct misleading impressions resulting from a circular from his Department stating that gluten-free products should be available on National Health Service prescription for exceptional cases only.

Mr. Mellor: There has been no change in the Department's guidelines to doctors about the prescription of gluten-free products on the National Health Service. The guidance recently provided to general practitioners in a leaflet entitled "Guidelines for Prescribing Borderline Substances" incorporates the Department's long-standing policy on this matter.

It is not the function of the NHS to provide food for people in the community, even for those who have to follow special diets for medical reasons. However, we do recognise that in some cases it may be necessary for doctors to prescribe foods in order to enable their patients to maintain their diet. A range of specially manufactured gluten-free foods is therefore available on prescription for patients with coeliac disease or dermatitis herpetiformis where the doctor considers that his active intervention is needed to help the patient keep to a suitable diet. We have always considered that such cases would be the exception rather than the rule.

Baby Food

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has issued to environmental health officers concerning the need for safeguards arising out of baby food contamination.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 2 May. The public advice issued was copied to chief environmental health officers of local authorities who were asked to draw this to the attention of those in charge of homes and other establishments caring for children locally.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many regional health authorities have submitted their plans for integration of the Disablement Services Authority to his Department; and what steps he is taking to encourage prompt submission of such plans.

Mr. Mellor: We have received plans for the integration of the Disablement Services Authority from 13 of the 14 regional health authorities. I understand that the remaining plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and will be submitted as soon as it is finalised.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings are planned between experts from various European Economic Community countries, including the United Kingdom, to discuss European Economic Community parallel importing schemes of pharmaceutical products, and the problem of counterfeiting; when these are to take place; who will represent Her Majesty's Government; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to meet these problems.

Mr. Mellor: We have written to the Commission and to our EC colleagues suggesting that a meeting of experts would be helpful to discuss whether any changes to parallel importing arrangements might be needed in the light of the recent incident involving counterfeit Zantac tablets. We are in touch with the Commission about how best to follow this up.

Trainee GPs

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the arrangements for determining the number of trainee general practitioners each year; what cash limits are set which would govern the number of trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There are no manpower nor budgetary controls which determine the number of doctors training for general practice.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to reduce the number of general practitioner trainees in England and Wales or to alter arrangements regarding duly appointed trainers' recruitment of trainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. We have no plans to put controls on the number of doctors training for general practice, or to prescribe the standards by which trainers in general practice select their trainees.

Clinical Effectiveness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider the merits of the proposals on measuring clinical effectiveness contained in the COHSE response to the National Health Service White Paper.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will be responding positively to the request that he meet representatives from COHSE to discuss the proposals on measuring clinical effectiveness contained in that union's response to the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. David Mellor: I will be writing to the general secretary of COHSE shortly about his request for the meeting on his union's response to "Working for Patients".

ENERGY

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will *(a)* list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat, *(b)* list for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein and *(c)* express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department operates no research establishments of its own. All research work is

contracted out to a variety of institutions, including private sector companies, none of which is run on the Department's behalf.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if the staff to be employed at the main office of the electricity regulator will be drawn from seconded or transferred civil servants;

(2) if all the posts within the office of the regulator, including those which will serve the consumer organisation, will be offered to the staff of existing consumer councils;

(3) what action has been taken to identify or to secure offices or locations for officers within OFFER; and if options on leases have been taken up or offers made for the purchase of premises.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Office of Electricity Regulation (OFFER), like the existing regulatory offices, will be a non-ministerial Government Department. Its staff will therefore be classed as civil servants. It is too early to say what proportion of these may be seconded or transferred from other Departments. The staff of the existing electricity consultative councils will be able to apply for posts in OFFER.

No final decisions have been taken on the locations of offices.

Hinkley Point C

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what communications his Department has received from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, since 1 January, in connection with the Hinkley Point C public inquiry; and whether he has assessed the content of the CND proofs of evidence presented to the Hinkley inquiry, in so far as they refer to matters for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1 January my Department has received one letter from CND in connection with the Hinkley Point C public inquiry. The assessment of evidence submitted to the inquiry is a matter for the inspector. I shall consider the inspector's report most carefully in reaching my decision on the CEGB's application.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Timber and Wood Products

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current import cost of timber and wood products; what was the comparable cost in the years before the 1988 Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information on the value of imports of timber and wood products for 1984-88 is given in the table:

United Kingdom imports of timber and wood products 1984-1988
£ million

	Timber	*Wood products*
1984	1,008·3	968·2
1985	893·8	1,012·0
1986	999·3	1,137·9
1987	1,197·2	1,253·8
1988	1,354·5	1,490·9

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
1. Timber defined as Standard International Trade Classification Revisions 2 and 3 Division 24 less Item 244.
2. Wood products defined as SITC R3 Division 63 less Item 633, and Items 821.16 and 821.5 in 1988; and SITC R2 Division 63 less 633 and Items 821.11 (pt), 821.19 (pt) and 821.92 for the previous years.
3. 1988 figures provisional.

Consumer Credit Act

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many responses he has received to his Department's proposals to amend the Consumer Credit Act 1974; and whether he will supply details of the nature of the responses.

Mr. Maude: The Department has recently undertaken several consultation exercises on proposed amendments to consumer credit legislation covering areas such as secured lending, advertising of credit, inclusion of broker's fees in calculation of the APR, licensing and EC proposals for a directive on a harmonised method of calculating the APR. The White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" Cm. 512 also lists proposed amendments to consumer credit legislation.

About half the bodies consulted about such proposals normally respond. The majority of the proposed amendments are to simplify and clarify the legislation, to reflect the current practices of the credit industry or to remove onerous requirements from lenders or borrowers. Many of the changes have been suggested by lenders or borrowers and the proposed changes have been generally supported by consultees.

Import Penetration

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the optical precision instrument industry (SIC order 3732) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Optical precision instruments
SIC Activity 3732

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Employment '000s[1]	—	—	—	5	5
Trade Balance £ million[2]	−156	−187	−274	−319	−243
Import Penetration per cent.[2]	49	52	65	56	50

Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment	—	—	—	100	100
Import Penetration	98	104	130	112	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the pharmaceuticals industry (SIC order 257) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Pharmaceuticals
SIC Group 257

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	91	95	100	105	112	121
Employment '000s [2]	68	68	67	68	71	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+591	+664	+823	+840	+829	+867
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	22	25	25	25	25	24
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[6]	81	85	89	93	100	108
Employment	95	95	94	96	100	—
Import Penetration	88	100	100	100	100	96

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: to ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the medical equipment manufacture industry (SIC order 372) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Medical equipment manufacturing industry
SIC Group 372

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	90	100	100	101	108	122
Employment '000s [2]	—	—	—	2	22	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+52	+52	+88	+105	+99	—
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	64	69	84	84	82	—
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[6]	83	93	93	94	100	113
Employment	—	—	—	100	100	—
Import Penetration	78	84	102	102	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the measuring instrument manufacture industry (SIC order 371) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Measuring Etc. Instrument Manufacture
SIC Group 371

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	84	87	100	101	110	118
Employment '000s [2]	—	—	—	56	55	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+88	+67	+80	+120	+94	—

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	21	21	19	18	19	—
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[6]	76	79	91	92	100	107
Employment	—	—	—	102	100	—
Import Penetration	111	111	100	95	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the instrument engineering industry (SIC order 37) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Instrument engineering industry
SIC group 37

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000s[1]	104	104	105	105	103
Trade balance £ million[2]	−182	−268	−309	−387	−350
Import penetration per cent.[2]	55	58	57	56	58
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]					
Employment	101	101	102	102	100
Import penetration	95	100	98	96	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the shipbuilding and shiprepairing industry (SIC order 361) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Shipbuilding and shiprepairing industry
SIC group 361

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	124	113	100	86	[4]87
Employment '000s[2]	—	—	—	83	76
Trade balance £ million[3]	+195	+326	+158	−69	+122
Import penetration per cent.[3]	11	34	11	48	31
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]					
Index of production[6]	143	130	115	99	100
Employment	—	—	—	109	100
Import penetration	36	110	36	155	100

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional.
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the other telecommunication industry (SIC orders 3453 and 3454) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Other electronic equipment industry
SIC Activities 3453 and 3454

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000s[1]	—	—	—	103	111
Trade Balance £ million[2]	−1,341	−1,230	−1,212	−1,210	−1,430
Import Penetration per cent.[2]	77	81	90	91	96
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]					
Employment	—	—	—	93	100
Import Penetration	80	84	94	95	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the telecommunications equipment manufacturing industry (SIC order 344) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Telecommunication equipment and other electronic industrial goods
SIC Group 344

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000s[1]	—	—	—	172	169
Trade Balance £ million[2]	+148	+70	+222	+245	+88
Import Penetration per cent.[2]	36	37	39	39	43
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]					
Employment	—	—	—	102	100
Import Penetration	116	114	109	109	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the basic electrical manufacturing industry (SIC order 342) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Basic electrical equipment industry
SIC Group 342

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000s[1]	—	—	—	104	98
Trade Balance £ million[2]	+540	+389	+445	+523	+261
Import Penetration per cent.[2]	36	38	45	42	47
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]					
Employment	—	—	—	106	100
Import Penetration	69	81	96	89	100

Source:
[1] Departmet of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the electrical electronic engineering industry (SIC order 34) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Electrical and elecronic engineering
SIC Class 34

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	*1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	89	97	100	102	104	111
Employment '000s[2]	615	607	594	569	560	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	−1,034	−1,400	−1,220	−1,318	−2,025	—
Import Penetration[3]	42	44	47	47	49	—

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987=100[5]						
Index of production[6]	86	93	96	98	100	107
Employment	110	108	106	102	100	—
Import Penetration	86	90	96	96	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional.
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987=100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the office machinery and data processing manufacturing industry (SIC order 33) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Office machinery and data processing manufacturing
SIC Class 33

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000[1]	80	84	91	92	96
Trade Balance £ million[2]	−947	−1,040	−670	−686	−887
Import Penetration per cent[2]	106	105	100	100	93
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987=100[3]					
Employment	80	88	95	96	100
Import Penetration	114	113	108	108	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the machinery for food and chemical industry (SIC order 324) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information available is shown in the table:

Food and chemical industry
SIC Group 324

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Index of production 1985=100[1]	98	97	100	105	96	101
Employment '000[2]	—	—	—	41	41	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+155	+92	+162	+120	+102	—
Import Penetration per cent[3]	53	57	59	61	55	—
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987=100[5]						
Index of production[6]	102	101	104	109	100	105
Employment	—	—	—	100	100	—
Import Penetration	96	104	107	111	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional.
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987=100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the metal working and machine tool industry (SIC order 322) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Metal working machine tools etc industry
SIC Activity 322

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985=100[1]	79	89	100	92	92	102
Employment '000s[2]	—	—	—	77	76	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+43	−21	−16	−156	−24	—

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	37	40	38	40	39	—
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[3]	86	97	109	100	100	111
Employment	—	—	—	101	100	—
Import Penetration	95	103	97	103	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the boiler and process plant industry (SIC order 3205) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Boilers and process plant fabrications
SIC Group 3205

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Employment '000s [1]	—	—	—	27	26
Trade Balance £ million[2]	−59	+146	+121	+123	+122
Import Penetration per cent.[2]	19	7	9	9	11
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[3]					
Employment	—	—	—	104	100
Import Penetration	142	64	82	82	100

Source:
[1] Department of Employment.
[2] Department of Trade and Industry.
[3] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the mechanical engineering industry (SIC order 32) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Mechanical engineering industry
SIC Class 32

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	94	96	100	98	98	105
Employment '000s [2]	775	757	757	728	715	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+1,938	+1,951	+2,136	+1,792	+1,406	—
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	32	34	36	37	38	—
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[6]	96	98	102	100	100	107
Employment	108	106	106	102	100	—
Import Penetration	84	89	95	97	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the output of, employment in, balance of trade for, and extent of import penetration in, the soap and detergents industry (SIC order 2581) for each year since 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1988; and if he will express the figures in each case as an index with the latest available year as the base.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is shown in the table:

Soap and detergents industry
SIC Activity 2581

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Index of production 1985 = 100[1]	92	96	100	106	108	111
Employment '000s [2]	13	12	12	12	12	—
Trade Balance £ million[3]	+71	+80	+83	+83	+60	+42

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[4]1988
Import Penetration per cent.[3]	7	8	8	9	11	12
Series expressed as index numbers referenced to 1987 = 100[5]						
Index of production[6]	85	88	92	98	100	102
Employment	111	106	101	101	100	—
Import Penetration	64	73	73	82	100	—

Source:
[1] Central Statistical Office.
[2] Department of Employment.
[3] Department of Trade and Industry.
[4] Provisional
[5] No index numbers have been provided for the trade balance as it is not suitable for treatment in this way.
[6] Index of production re-referenced to 1987 = 100.

Overseas Firms

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas firms are based in Warrington-Runcorn; and what proportion of these are north American in origin.

Mr. Atkins: There are more than 140 overseas-owned companies now operating in Warrington-Runcorn, of which about half are north-American owned.

Wool Textiles

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has reached a decision on the future of the wool textile industry (export promotion) levy.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes. Following consultation with wool textile industry organisations and trades unions, and in the light of all of the views received, Ministers have decided that the levy should continue in force, administered by my Department. Under these arrangements, I look forward to the National Wool Textile Export Corporation continuing and developing the valuable range of services it provides for the industry in export markets.

Welsh Intermediate Education Act (Centenary)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has received any representations regarding the issue of commemorative stamps to note the centenary of the passing of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have received no such recommendations. Special stamp issues are a matter for the Post Office, but I understand that it, too, received no requests to mark this centenary in its 1989 special stamp programme.

Eastern Europe (Trade)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to respond to the Trade and Industry Select Committee report on trade with Eastern Europe published in December 1988 (HC 51).

Mr. Alan Clark: I sent a memorandum setting out the Government response to the report to the Chairman of the Select Committee on 20 March. Publication of the memorandum is a matter for the Committee. I shall be giving further oral evidence to the Committee on 14 June.

Lead-free Petrol

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to monitor the extent to which reduced duties for lead-free petrol are passed on to the consumer by the major petrol retailers.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 April 1989]:* No.

Petrol

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the source of the recent representations he has received concerning the level of competition in the petrol retail industry.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 25 April 1989]:* I have received representations both from hon. Members and from members of the public.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to take steps to increase competition in the petrol retail industry.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Under United Kingdom competition legislation, it falls to the Director General of Fair Trading to keep competition in the United Kingdom under review. The director general referred the wholesale supply of petrol to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 9 November 1988. The commission is due to report to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State by 8 November this year, and it would be inappropriate to comment on this matter in the meantime.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concering the current average prices charged by the major petrol retailers in *(a)* Macclesfield, *(b)* the north-west region and *(c)* the United Kingdom as a whole for four-star petrols.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* My Department does not have such information.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concering the current prices being charged by the major petrol retailers for unleaded and leaded petrol.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* No such information is kept.

SCOTLAND

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board

18. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairman of Ayrshire and Arran health board; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans at present to meet the chairman of Ayrshire and Arran health board.

ScotRail

19. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the management of ScotRail; and what subjects he discussed with them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed various topics relating to rail transport when he met the chairman of the British Rail (Scottish) board, Mr. John Cameron, on 26 April 1989.

The Union

20. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to strengthen the Scottish dimension of the Union of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Rifkind: No. We believe that the present constitutional arrangements should continue as they provide for Scotland's special interests and nationhood to be fully respected and recognised. Within them Scots and Scottish institutions play a full and very important part in all aspects of life of the United Kingdom.

NHS Reform

21. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those organisations and individuals who have submitted responses endorsing without criticism his consultative paper on the future of the Health Service in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A number of generally positive responses and constructive comments have been received.

Glasgow

23. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to make a visit to Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: My next official visit to Glasgow will be on 19 May to attend the Scottish press awards lunch.

Moray

24. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Moray.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no immediate plans to visit Moray.

Angus, East

25. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Angus, East.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no immediate plans to visit Angus East.

Coal Industry

26. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the total number of jobs directly and indirectly dependent on Scotland's coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: British Coal has some 3,400 employees in Scotland at present. In addition, approximately 1,200 people are employed on opencast and deep mining by subcontractors, and there around 300 people working in licensed private mining. Figures on the number of indirectly dependent jobs are not available.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

27. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Highlands and Islands Development Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend met the chairman of the Highlands and Islands Development Board at a meeting of the Scottish Economic Council held on 20 January in Edinburgh when general matters relating to the board's area were discussed.

Community Charge

22. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the implementation of the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: As planned, the community charge was introduced in Scotland on 1 April 1989. Following the canvass of households which commenced in April 1988, about 99 per cent. of the adult population registered for the community charge. Community charges registration officers are now busy with the task of maintaining their registers. Local authorities have publicised the availability of rebates, found out about the method of payment that charge payers wish to use and have been working very hard to process the large number of applications for rebates which they have received. I am extremely pleased with the good progress which has been made by all concerned in implementing the community charge in Scotland.

28. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish tourist industry about the standard community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

31. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for a poll tax rebate in each of the regions of Scotland have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Lang: This information is not held centrally.

32. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the numbers who have not paid their poll tax for April.

Mr. Lang: It will be some months before reliable information on the levels of payment of the community charge becomes available.

49. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will carry out a study of the impact of the standard community charge since its introduction on 1 April; and if, in light of that study, he will then review the legislation in relation to the standard community charge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for such a study.

50. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the payment of the community charge by Scottish police officers pending determination of the final determination of the police housing allowance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a small number of representations regarding the police rent allowance issue. In its recent award on this matter, the police arbitration tribunal concluded that the community charge payable by police officers or their spouses should not be reimbursed by police authorities.

44. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scots will be receiving rebates of the poll tax in the current year.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that over one million adults in Scotland will receive a community charge rebate in 1989-90.

34. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the incidence of the community charge on those in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Lang: A number of representations have been received about the community charge rebate scheme which is based on the previous housing benefit scheme for rate rebates.

A74 (Crash Barriers)

29. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of the A74 have been installed with crash barriers in the past year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of 2·2 km (1·4 miles) of central reserve safety fencing was installed in 1988-89. The provision of a further 4·4 km of fencing is in progress or planned to start shortly leaving 4·4 km to be installed thereafter. This really should be a priority on grounds of safety.

Inward Investment

30. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he plans in arrangements for encouraging inward investment in industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: There are no changes currently planned to the existing arrangements. Locate in Scotland will continue with its policies to encourage links with existing companies already in Scotland, and to develop new links with potential inward investors outwith Scotland, through its existing offices in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Regional Policy

33. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he proposes to regional policy as it affects Scotland.

Mr. Lang: None. An effective range of measures is in place.

High Technology Industries

35. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage the growth of new high technology industries in the longer-established industrial areas of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office administers directly a range of financial and advisory support for new and expanding high technology industries. These efforts, together with those of the Scottish Development Agency and of Locate in Scotland are aimed at encouraging the setting up and growth of indigenous high technology industry, as well as attracting foreign companies in this sector to Scotland.

Piper Alpha

36. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what surveys have been undertaken by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland in respect of pollution following the Piper Alpha tragedy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 11 January 1989. Monitoring by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has been continuing and a report will be published shortly.

Sewerage Charges

37. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from organisations including Churches regarding their new liability for sewerage charges; and if he will now seek to amend the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act to remove the liability.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Representations about the new liability for sewage charges have been received from one community council.

The Government are monitoring the effect of introducing the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and will consider carefully any representations made.

Community Care

38. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss community care in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Bathing Waters

39. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he plans to take to bring Scotland's bathing waters up to the standards set by EEC directives.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Where identified bathing waters do not meet the standard set in the EC

bathing water directive, sewage discharges from public sewers are often a contributory factor. In these circumstances, it is for the regional councils as sewerage authorities, in conjunction with the river purification authorities, to plan and execute improvement works. In other cases, it is for the river purification authority to identify the source of pollution and pursue measures to improve the water with the polluter. The latest position is set out in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 13 April at columns *682-83*.

Electricity Privatisation

40. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the increased cost of electricity connection charges following privatisation of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board.

Mr. Lang: There is no reason to expect such an increase. Under the Electricity Bill currently before Parliament, all owners or occupiers will have a right to a supply on reasonable terms and also a right of appeal to the Director General of Electricity Supply if they wish to dispute the terms quoted by the supplier. These arrangements will ensure that, following privatisation, electricity connection charges are fair and properly reflect the costs incurred.

Sane Automatism

41. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to change the criminal law of Scotland to allow sane automatism to be an acceptable legal defence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no such plans.

National Farmers Union

42. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and my noble Friend have regular meetings with union representatives. My noble Friend met the president most recently at the union's annual general meeting on 10 March when a wide range of topics was discussed.

Prestwick Airport

43. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Prestwick international airport.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Schools (Representations)

45. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received on *(a)* self-governing schools and *(b)* school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As at 18 April 1989, 90 responses have been received to the descriptive paper "Self-Governing Schools" which we published in December 1988. During the three months August to November 1987, 7,981 responses were received to the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Labour Statistics

46. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of individuals in employment in *(a)* north Tayside and *(b)* Scotland, in December 1975, December 1978 and December 1988.

Mr. Lang: The table gives the available information. For Scotland for 1975 estimates are available only for June and for Tayside, North parliamentary constituency only for 1981 and 1984 from the census of employment. The December 1988 figure for Scotland may be revised when the results of the 1987 census of employment become available later this year.

Employees in employment

		Thousands
Scotland		
June	1975	2,076·1
December	1978	2,074·8
December	1988	1,943·5
North Tayside		
September	1981	22·3
September	1984	21·0

Economy (Fraser of Allander Report)

47. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the recent Fraser of Allander report on the Scottish economy, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lang: In its March 1989 "Quarterly Economic Commentary" the Fraser of Allander institute clearly recognises the current strength of the Scottish economy. According to the institute, Scottish economic growth this year is likely to be no worse than that of the United Kingdom and might be 0·5 percentage points higher.

Local Government (Competitive Tendering)

48. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding competitive tendering in local government in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities are now fully engaged in implementing the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988. Detailed implementation regulations were made in August 1988 and the first round of work won in competition has to be under way by 1 August this year with further rounds by 1 January and 1 August in subsequent years.

From the limited information available so far it would appear that local authorities have themselves been winning contracts in a number of cases. But where any anti-competitive practice is alleged by contractors my officials will follow up the cases with the local authorities concerned.

Forth Valley Health Board

17. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of the Forth Valley health board reside in *(a)* the parliamentary constituencies of *(a)* Stirling, *(b)* Clackmannan, *(c)* Falkirk, West and *(d)* Falkirk, East.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of members who reside in each of the following parliamentary constituencies is as follows:

(a) Stirling 10
(b) Clackmannan 1
(c) Falkirk West 4
(d) Falkirk East 0.

Elton Committee

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the implications for the Scottish Education Department arising from the Elton committee's report on indiscipline in English and Welsh schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report does not extend to Scotland. many of the key recommendations are, however, paralleled in existing Scottish initiatives or practices.

Teachers Salaries

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to review the status and future of the SJNC (TSSE).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following a recommendation of the Main committee of inquiry into the pay and conditions of service of school teachers in Scotland, the present negotiating machinery remains to be reviewed.

In response to recent representations by the professional associations representing headteachers in Scotland, the Government are considering making an amendment to the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill which would enable my right hon. and learned Friend to remove certain categories of staff from the statutory ambit of the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education.

Teaching (Environment)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to collate a full report on the physical environment of teaching in Scottish schools, arising from the regular references made to such matters by Her Majesty's inspectors in their reports on schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. It is for individual authorities to ensure that the physical environment of their schools is conducive to good teaching. They have substantial financial resources, both current and capital, at their disposal for this purpose.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those radioactive substances for which his Department carries out routine exploratory tests in coastline areas; where those sites are; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought is included in the statistical bulletins: "Environmental Monitoring for Radioactivity in Scotland" published by the Scottish Development Department, the most recent covering the years 1981-1985 having been published in April 1987. A further edition for the period 1983-1987 is due to be published shortly.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to issue a special development order to permit Nirex UK Ltd. to test-drill on the Dounreay nuclear power development establishment site in Caithness to assess its suitability for a deep repository for low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 21 March at column *506*. We expect any planning application for test drilling to go through normal planning procedures. I understand that a planning application in respect of Dounreay has recently been submitted to Highland regional council.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 May 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Expenditure)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Mr. Butcher: While local authorities' expenditure returns to the Department of the Environment show separate figures for books and equipment, these need to be treated with caution because of differing local authority practices in allocating expenditure between the two items. The table therefore shows spending figures for books and equipment as well as for books and equipment separately.

Expenditure per pupil[1]—England

	Primary			Secondary			Special		
	Cash £	Real[2] terms £	Index	Cash £	Real[2] terms £	Index	Cash £	Real[2] terms £	Index
Books and equipment									
1978-79	12·85	26·25	100	24·40	49·86	100	37·16	75·93	100
1979-80	14·33	25·11	96	26·61	46·60	93	41·78	73·19	96
1980-81	16·05	23·71	94	29·26	43·23	93	46·73	69·04	94
1981-82	18·16	24·45	103	32·18	43·32	100	51·09	68·78	100
1982-83	20·90	26·28	107	36·53	45·93	106	61·00	76·69	112
1983-84	22·79	27·39	104	39·21	47·12	103	68·24	81·99	107
1984-85	23·54	26·96	98	42·53	48·70	103	70·45	80·67	98
1985-86	24·91	27·04	100	44·83	48·67	100	88·84	96·44	120
1986-87	28·04	29·45	109	57·15	60·02	123	87·58	91·98	95
1987-88	30·67	30·67	104	62·27	62·27	104	98·73	98·73	107
Books									
1978-79	4·25	8·68	100	7·16	14·64	100	5·93	12·12	100
1979-80	4·69	8·21	95	7·82	13·69	94	6·73	11·79	97
1980-81	5·32	7·86	96	8·08	11·94	87	6·90	10·20	87
1981-82	5·91	7·96	101	8·60	11·58	97	7·09	9·55	94
1982-83	7·00	8·80	111	9·89	12·43	107	8·65	10·87	114
1983-84	7·14	8·58	98	10·09	12·12	98	8·68	10·43	96
1984-85	7·29	8·34	97	10·15	11·62	96	9·12	10·44	100
1985-86	7·49	8·13	97	10·66	11·58	100	11·46	12·44	119
1986-87	8·25	8·66	107	13·13	13·79	119	10·65	11·18	90
1987-88	8·99	8·99	104	14·92	14·92	108	12·21	12·21	109
Equipment									
1978-79	8·60	17·57	100	17·24	35·22	100	31·23	63·81	100
1979-80	9·65	16·90	96	18·79	32·91	93	35·05	61·40	96
1980-81	10·73	15·85	94	21·17	31·29	95	39·83	58·85	96
1981-82	12·25	16·49	104	23·58	31·74	101	44·00	59·23	101
1982-83	13·91	17·48	106	26·65	33·50	106	52·35	65·82	111
1983-84	15·65	18·81	108	29·12	34·99	104	59·56	71·56	109
1984-85	16·26	18·61	99	32·38	37·07	106	61·33	70·22	98
1985-86	17·42	18·91	102	34·17	37·09	100	77·38	84·00	120
1986-87	19·79	20·78	110	44·02	46·23	125	76·94	80·80	96
1987-88	21·68	21·68	104	47·35	47·35	102	86·52	86·52	107

[1] The figures are based on local education authority returns to Department of the Environment and pupil number returns to Department of Education and Science.

[2] The cash figures for earlier years have been repriced to 1987-88 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

National Curriculum

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the printing and publishing costs and *(b)* the numbers of all the documents circulated to schools, local education authorities and the general public concerning the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table lists DES documents concerning the national curriculum which have been published following the Education Reform Act 1988, with figures for printing costs and copies printed. The National Curriculum Council also publishes information and advice on the national curriculum.

DES Documents on the National Curriculum

	Date of publication	*Printing costs £*	*Number printed*
School Curriculum and Assessment			
Draft Circular	October 1988	2,400	1,600
Final Circular 5/89	February 1989	18,000	103,000
Local Arrangements for the Consideration of Complaints			
Draft Circular	September 1988	600	1,500
Final Circular 1/89	January 1989	19,800	82,500
School Curriculum and Related Information			
Discussion paper on information requirements	September 1988	1,000	1,500
Draft Circular and regulations	January 1989	1,700	1,600
Section 19 of ERA 1988: temporary exceptions for individual pupils			
Draft Circular and Regulations	April 1989	28,000	35,000
Mathematics			
Proposals (on attainment targets and programmes of study)	August 1988	114,700	100,000
Draft Orders	December 1988	3,900	2,000
Statutory Orders and Associated Documents and Circular 6/89	March 1989	697,000	318,000
Science			
Proposals (on attainment targets and programmes of study)	August 1988	143,900	120,000
Draft Orders	December 1988	5,400	2,300
Statutory Orders and Associated Documents and Circular 6/89	March 1989	663,400	318,000
English (Primary)			
Proposals (on attainment targets and programmes of study)	November 1988	103,700	170,000
Draft Orders	March 1989	1,500	1,500
Design and Technology			
Interim Report of Working Group	November 1988	37,500	15,000
Modern Foreign Languages			
Draft Order and Circular	March 1989	1,200	2,500
Other Documents			
From Policy to Practice	February 1989	215,000	600,000

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will make it his policy to distribute copies to school teachers of the order for English, key stage 1 in the national curriculum, when he lays the order before the House; if he will ensure that such a distribution is completed before the end of the current school term; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that all primary school teachers with responsibility for teaching English to children in key stage 1 of the national curriculum from September will have adequate access to the relevant programmes of study and attainment targets before the end of the current school term; if he will consider the practical difficulties facing primary school teachers in the case that such access before the end of the current school term is not achieved; what is the earliest date for the end of the current school term of which his Department is aware; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what progress has been made towards making the statutory order for English, key stage 1 in the national curriculum since his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) of 17 March, *Official Report*, columns *357-58*; whether he still expects to make the final order in May; what account he has taken in his plans of the approaching end of the current school term; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all primary school teachers with responsibility for teaching English to children in key stage 1 of the national curriculum from September will have adequate access to the relevant programmes of study and attainment targets before the end of the summer term; by what date he expects such teachers will have been provided with *(a)* adequate access to the relevant programmes of study and attainment targets and *(b)* such other relevant information as may be planned by his Department or the National Curriculum Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following completion of consultations on the draft, my right hon. Friend aims to lay the final order for English in key stage 1 of the national curriculum before Parliament at the end of May. Immediately afterwards, he intends to send initial copies, with the accompanying statutory document and circular of guidance, direct to all maintained primary and secondary schools, nursery schools, special schools, local education authorities, teacher training institutions and other bodies. Bulk supplies will then be dispatched to local education authorities by mid-June for delivery to all primary and special school teachers. Further priced copies of the document will be available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. This should enable schools and teachers concerned with English in key stage 1 to have details of the attainment targets and programmes of study well before the end of their summer terms. The National Curriculum Council plans to issue non-statutory guidance to schools during the summer.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the

numbers of additional students who may participate in higher education as a consequence of the proposals to increase tuition fees announced in his consultative paper.

Mr. Jackson: The impact of higher fees will be one of the factors to be taken into account in revising student number projections from time to time. It will be for individual institutions to decide how to respond to the incentives to compete for and recruit students which our proposals offer.

Encephalopathies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the research being sponsored by his Department into transmissible encephalopathies.

Mr. Jackson: This Department is funding research on transmissible encephalopathies in animals, namely, on scrapie in sheep and bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle, at the AFRC Institute for Animal Health.

Superannuation (Employers' Contributions)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent and amount he expects local education authorities to offset the additional cost of the recommended pay increase for school teachers by means of the reduction in employers' contributions for superannuation; to what extent and amount this reduction in employers' contributions for superannuation relates to the employment of school teachers, as against other categories of employees; to what extent and amount this reduction in employers' contributions has been taken into account elsewhere in assumptions for block grant calculations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The effect of the 1·4 per cent. reduction in the cost of employers' contributions to the teachers' superannuation scheme flowing from the report of the Government Actuary will be to reduce the salary bill of local authorities in England by about £100 million, of which the savings in respect of further education lecturers and other teachers not employed to work in schools will be about £15 million. The rate support grant settlement which preceded the Actuary's report assumed savings of about 1 per cent.

Capital Projects (Kent)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about support for voluntary aided capital projects in Kent.

Mr. Butcher: Since the announcement of the capital allocations for education on 21 December 1988 my right hon. Friend has received two representations about voluntary-aided capital projects in Kent. These specifically concerned the Judd school in Tonbridge.

Roman Catholic Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the capital loan approvals given for Roman Catholic aided schools in each of the last four years.

Mr. Butcher: Capital loans under section 105 of the Education Act 1944 have been made in respect of the following Roman Catholic voluntary aided schools:

Financial Year		£
1985-86		
25 May 1985	St. Mary Magdalene, Buckinghamshire	45,226
10 June 1985	St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Redbridge	30,245
2 October 1985	Corpus Christi High, Waltham Forest	25,000
25 October 1985	St. Paul's High, Manchester	25,000
23 January 1986	Corpus Christi High, Waltham Forest	104,806
1986-87		
11 July 1986	St. Paul's High, Manchester	85,094
11 July 1986	De Lisle, Leicestershire	89,758
13 March 1987	St. Mary's, Leicestershire	42,775
1987-88	Nil	
1988-89		
22 September 1988	St. Paul's, Buckinghamshire	25,000
14 December 1988	St. Paul's, Buckinghamshire	211,688
14 February 1989	St. Joseph's, Derbyshire	25,000
20 February 1989	St. Joseph's, Derbyshire	83,383

Teachers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for each local education authority the total number of teachers employed, the number who hold instructor status, the number who are graduates with no formal teaching qualification, graduates with a post graduate certificate in education, graduates with a bachelor of education degree and non-graduates with a teacher training qualification; what percentage each category represents of all the teachers in each authority; and what were these figures and percentages for the same categories in 1974;

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 10 April 1989]:* Information is not available in the full detail requested and is not all compiled on the same basis. Data on instructors and student teachers include both full and part-time staff, while those on the graduate status and teacher training of qualified teachers include only those in full-time service, and also relate to different time points.

Table 1 shows the total full-time equivalent of full and part-time teachers and instructors employed by each local education authority in England and Wales in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in January 1988, and the number and percentage of these that were instructors or student teachers.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of full-time qualified teachers in these schools by graduate status and teacher training, for each authority and at March 1986 (the latest date for which these figures are available).

Tables 3 and 4 contain figures on the same basis for 1974. National totals only are available.

Table 1: Instructors and student teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools—January 1988

	Instructors and student teachers (full-time equivalents)	*All teachers and instructors*	*Instructors and student teachers as a percentage of all teachers and instructors*
Barking	46·5	1,388·1	3·3
Barnet	19·3	2,545·3	0·8
Bexley	12·9	1,783·1	0·7
Brent	28·3	2,522·9	1·1
Bromley	5·4	1,979·2	0·3
Croydon	23·6	2,540·6	0·9
Ealing	16·1	2,345·6	0·7
Enfield	21·8	2,255·3	1·0
Haringey	2·0	1,827·3	0·1
Harrow	19·2	1,470·9	1·3
Havering	43·3	2,157·4	2·0
Hillingdon	8·0	1,808·1	0·4
Hounslow	19·2	1,862·7	1·0
Kingston	2·5	1,062·6	0·2
Merton	3·0	1,268·1	0·2
Newham	41·7	2,280·6	1·8
Redbridge	21·3	1,664·4	1·3
Richmond	7·1	958·4	0·7
Sutton	6·1	1,250·3	0·5
Waltham Forest	44·3	2,184·0	2·0
ILEA	370·4	20,020·0	1·9
Birmingham	6·0	9,574·6	0·1
Coventry	50·7	2,895·0	1·8
Dudley	12·6	2,713·2	0·5
Sandwell	9·3	2,841·6	0·3
Solihull	13·9	1,858·7	0·7
Walsall	3·3	2,830·9	0·1
Wolverhampton	3·5	2,597·5	0·1
Knowsley	2·9	1,669·6	0·2
Liverpool	10·4	4,701·4	0·2
St. Helens	5·3	1,818·5	0·3
Sefton	7·7	2,418·8	0·3
Wirral	0·6	2,949·6	0·0
Bolton	16·4	2,566·8	0·6
Bury	5·1	1,508·5	0·3
Manchester	31·8	4,444·5	0·7
Oldham	6·0	2,218·0	0·3
Rochdale	5·0	2,206·8	0·2
Salford	0·6	2,107·7	0·0
Stockport	6·9	2,528·5	0·3
Tameside	0·0	1,878·1	0·0
Trafford	4·7	1,706·1	0·3
Wigan	13·2	3,283·6	0·4
Barnsley	1·3	2,012·2	0·1
Doncaster	17·1	2,798·8	0·6
Rotherham	18·5	2,488·1	0·7
Sheffield	15·5	4,523·6	0·3
Bradford	24·3	4,945·6	0·5
Calderdale	10·0	1,837·0	0·5
Kirklees	36·8	3,725·2	1·0
Leeds	30·1	6,547·4	0·5
Wakefield	9·8	2,865·1	0·3
Gateshead	14·1	1,842·0	0·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	2·8	2,513·4	0·1
North Tyneside	12·0	2,082·0	0·6
South Tyneside	8·0	1,437·0	0·6
Sunderland	9·5	2,832·3	0·3
Avon	6·2	7,120·5	0·1
Bedfordshire	36·5	4,772·3	0·8
Berkshire	26·6	5,890·4	0·5
Buckinghamshire	17·0	4,948·7	0·3
Cambridgeshire	15·3	5,109·8	0·3
Cheshire	69·8	8,361·9	0·8
Cleveland	19·6	5,480·1	0·4
Cornwall	20·1	3,771·3	0·5
Cumbria	8·4	4,406·7	0·2
Derbyshire	15·9	8,352·6	0·2
Devon	17·5	7,109·2	0·2
Dorset	8·0	4,480·0	0·2
Durham	41·5	5,019·0	0·8
East Sussex	14·2	4,444·6	0·3
Essex	159·0	11,968·9	1·3
Gloucestershire	5·8	4,192·5	0·1

	Instructors and student teachers (full-time equivalents)	All teachers and instructors	Instructors and student teachers as a percentage of all teachers and instructors
Hampshire	86·5	11,674·4	0·7
Hereford and Worcester	11·7	5,272·7	0·2
Hertfordshire	65·6	8,828·4	0·7
Humberside	23·0	7,895·0	0·3
Isle of Wight	0·9	973·0	0·1
Kent	42·4	11,784·1	0·4
Lancashire	18·1	11,828·0	0·2
Leicestershire	26·0	7,658·3	0·3
Lincolnshire	18·6	4,555·5	0·4
Norfolk	56·1	5,526·6	1·0
North Yorkshire	27·0	5,547·5	0·5
Northamptonshire	48·0	5,235·9	0·9
Northumberland	4·3	2,684·3	0·2
Nottinghamshire	12·7	8,702·1	0·1
Oxfordshire	15·1	4,102·8	0·4
Shropshire	16·6	3,594·8	0·5
Somerset	5·1	3,378·7	0·2
Staffordshire	41·8	8,745·8	0·5
Suffolk	23·9	4,928·7	0·5
Surrey	14·9	6,946·2	0·2
Warwickshire	16·8	4,084·8	0·4
West Sussex	16·4	4,817·1	0·3
Wiltshire	9·8	4,370·8	0·2
England	2,270·4	401,506·6	0·6
Clwyd	12·6	3,547·6	0·4
Dyfed	10·4	3,248·2	0·3
Gwent	4·2	4,038·2	0·1
Gwynedd	1·0	2,295·0	0·0
Mid-Glamorgan	6·8	5,449·0	0·1
Powys	13·0	1,203·2	1·1
South Glamorgan	8·2	3,454·6	0·2
West Glamorgan	5·0	3,440·2	0·1
Wales	61·2	26,676·0	0·2
England and Wales	2,331·6	428,182·6	0·5

Table 2

Full-time qualified teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools by graduate status and teacher training—March 1986

	Numbers					Percentages			
	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]		Total	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]	
	Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates		Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates
Barking	638	587	68	27	1,320	48·3	44·5	5·2	2·0
Barnet	1,123	858	192	88	2,261	49·7	37·9	8·5	3·9
Bexley	738	795	82	47	1,662	44·4	47·8	4·9	2·8
Brent	1,083	1,058	241	99	2,481	43·7	42·6	9·7	4·0
Bromley	911	883	117	47	1,958	46·5	45·1	6·0	2·4
Croydon	931	1,164	130	58	2,283	40·8	51·0	5·7	2·5
Ealing	967	909	173	59	2,108	45·9	43·1	8·2	2·8
Enfield	994	814	122	44	1,974	50·4	41·2	6·2	2·2
Haringey	809	747	149	51	1,756	46·1	42·5	8·5	2·9
Harrow	676	616	102	35	1,429	47·3	43·1	7·1	2·4
Havering	924	905	131	43	2,003	46·1	45·2	6·5	2·1
Hillingdon	790	725	74	26	1,615	48·9	44·9	4·6	1·6
Hounslow	865	732	74	44	1,715	50·4	42·7	4·3	2·6
Kingston	474	400	47	13	934	50·7	42·8	5·0	1·4
Merton	570	490	63	29	1,152	49·5	42·5	5·5	2·5
Newham	991	778	121	49	1,939	51·1	40·1	6·2	2·5
Redbridge	747	670	102	43	1,562	47·8	42·9	6·5	2·8
Richmond	450	349	27	15	841	53·5	41·5	3·2	1·8
Sutton	520	457	68	23	1,068	48·7	42·8	6·4	2·2
Waltham Forest	850	854	121	30	1,855	45·8	46·0	6·5	1·6
ILEA	8,544	7,809	1,569	658	18,580	46·0	42·0	8·4	3·5
Birmingham	3,615	4,932	488	150	9,185	39·4	53·7	5·3	1·6
Coventry	1,156	1,378	138	52	2,724	42·4	50·6	5·1	1·9
Dudley	999	1,432	103	36	2,570	38·9	55·7	4·0	1·4
Sandwell	1,097	1,625	114	52	2,888	38·0	56·3	3·9	1·8
Solihull	756	923	83	20	1,782	42·4	51·8	4·7	1·1

	Numbers					Percentages			
	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]		Total	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]	
	Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates		Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates
Walsall	1,194	1,364	135	36	2,729	43·8	50·0	4·9	1·3
Wolverhampton	1,036	1,393	123	40	2,592	40·0	53·7	4·7	1·5
Knowsley	665	960	63	27	1,715	38·8	56·0	3·7	1·6
Liverpool	1,546	2,723	199	93	4,561	33·9	59·7	4·4	2·0
St. Helens	740	962	63	25	1,790	41·3	53·7	3·5	1·4
Sefton	918	1,288	112	43	2,361	38·9	54·6	4·7	1·8
Wirral	1,085	1,423	117	43	2,668	40·7	53·3	4·4	1·6
Bolton	917	1,322	106	35	2,380	38·5	55·5	4·5	1·5
Bury	622	744	77	24	1,467	42·4	50·7	5·2	1·6
Manchester	1,839	2,090	220	114	4,263	43·1	49·0	5·2	2·7
Oldham	848	1,098	69	28	2,043	41·5	53·7	3·4	1·4
Rochdale	881	1,117	67	38	2,103	41·9	53·1	3·2	1·8
Salford	966	1,106	89	43	2,204	43·8	50·2	4·0	2·0
Stockport	979	1,232	101	31	2,343	41·8	52·6	4·3	1·3
Tameside	736	1,021	60	24	1,841	40·0	55·5	3·3	1·3
Trafford	548	882	75	27	1,532	35·8	57·6	4·9	1·8
Wigan	1,212	1,744	136	43	3,135	38·7	55·6	4·3	1·4
Barnsley	699	1,275	61	19	2,054	34·0	62·1	3·0	0·9
Doncaster	913	1,620	65	30	2,628	34·7	61·6	2·5	1·1
Rotherham	970	1,345	70	27	2,412	40·2	55·8	2·9	1·1
Sheffield	1,904	2,326	142	53	4,425	43·0	52·6	3·2	1·2
Bradford	1,883	2,435	174	31	4,523	41·6	53·8	3·8	0·7
Calderdale	669	1,016	71	31	1,787	37·4	56·9	4·0	1·7
Kirklees	1,277	1,946	128	45	3,396	37·6	57·3	3·8	1·3
Leeds	2,630	3,159	207	49	6,045	43·5	52·3	3·4	0·8
Wakefield	910	1,760	84	28	2,782	32·7	63·3	3·0	1·0
Gateshead	562	1,138	44	18	1,762	31·9	64·6	2·5	1·0
Newcastle	970	1,352	72	16	2,410	40·2	56·1	3·0	0·7
North Tyneside	873	998	44	11	1,926	45·3	51·8	2·3	0·6
South Tyneside	523	949	25	16	1,513	34·6	62·7	1·7	1·1
Sunderland	1,000	1,713	62	25	2,800	35·7	61·2	2·2	0·9
Avon	3,064	3,282	215	60	6,621	46·3	49·6	3·2	0·9
Bedfordshire	1,524	2,416	226	83	4,249	35·9	56·9	5·3	2·0
Berkshire	2,579	2,512	275	65	5,431	47·5	46·3	5·1	1·2
Buckinghamshire	2,071	2,380	241	74	4,766	43·5	49·9	5·1	1·6
Cambridgeshire	2,124	2,431	204	78	4,837	43·9	50·3	4·2	1·6
Cheshire	3,223	4,158	311	62	7,754	41·6	53·6	4·0	0·8
Cleveland	1,616	3,308	244	77	5,245	30·8	63·1	4·7	1·5
Cornwall	1,313	1,919	127	41	3,400	38·6	56·4	3·7	1·2
Cumbria	1,538	2,286	159	51	4,034	38·1	56·7	3·9	1·3
Derbyshire	3,357	3,779	270	97	7,503	44·7	50·4	3·6	1·3
Devon	2,722	3,441	235	69	6,467	42·1	53·2	3·6	1·1
Dorset	1,744	2,156	151	54	4,105	42·5	52·5	3·7	1·3
Durham	1,521	3,341	130	40	5,032	30·2	66·4	2·6	0·8
East Sussex	2,004	1,813	168	48	4,033	49·7	45·0	4·2	1·2
Essex	4,466	5,968	637	212	11,283	39·6	52·9	5·6	1·9
Gloucestershire	1,611	1,952	154	47	3,764	42·8	51·9	4·1	1·2
Hampshire	4,310	5,726	418	152	10,606	40·6	54·0	3·9	1·4
Hereford and Worcester-shire	2,169	2,727	174	56	5,126	42·3	53·2	3·4	1·1
Hertfordshire	3,316	3,756	443	114	7,629	43·5	49·2	5·8	1·5
Humberside	3,063	4,211	306	96	7,676	39·9	54·9	4·0	1·3
Isle of Wight	354	430	36	15	835	42·4	51·5	4·3	1·8
Kent	4,242	5,973	621	272	11,108	38·2	53·8	5·6	2·4
Lancashire	4,284	6,008	352	133	10,777	39·8	55·7	3·3	1·2
Leicestershire	3,480	3,691	269	107	7,547	46·1	48·9	3·6	1·4
Lincolnshire	1,504	2,409	180	59	4,152	36·2	58·0	4·3	1·4
Norfolk	2,072	3,018	196	64	5,350	38·7	56·4	3·7	1·2
North Yorkshire	2,137	2,801	212	47	5,197	41·1	53·9	4·1	0·9
Northampton	2,302	2,583	200	62	5,147	44·7	50·2	3·9	1·2
Northumberland	938	1,577	76	23	2,614	35·9	60·3	2·9	0·9
Nottinghamshire	3,906	4,319	266	102	8,593	45·5	50·3	3·1	1·2
Oxfordshire	1,778	1,908	171	48	3,905	45·5	48·9	4·4	1·2
Shropshire	1,298	1,931	120	37	3,386	38·3	57·0	3·5	1·1
Somerset	1,394	1,639	99	26	3,158	44·1	51·9	3·1	0·8
Staffordshire	3,281	4,864	290	161	8,596	38·2	56·6	3·4	1·9
Suffolk	2,062	2,489	164	78	4,793	43·0	51·9	3·4	1·6
Surrey	2,501	3,313	334	122	6,270	39·9	52·8	5·3	1·9
Warwickshire	1,491	1,973	157	41	3,662	40·7	53·9	4·3	1·1
West Sussex	2,146	2,084	191	62	4,483	47·9	46·5	4·3	1·4
Wiltshire	1,743	2,081	127	29	3,980	43·8	52·3	3·2	0·7
England	156,981	197,044	16,909	6,015	376,949	41·6	52·3	4·5	1·6

	Numbers					Percentages			
	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]		Total	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]	
	Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates		Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates
Clwyd	1,511	1,812	112	23	3,458	43·7	52·4	3·2	0·7
Dyfed	1,209	1,775	121	18	3,123	38·7	56·8	3·9	0·6
Gwent	1,639	2,214	136	50	4,039	40·6	54·8	3·4	1·2
Gwynedd	941	1,214	74	14	2,243	42·0	54·1	3·3	0·6
Mid Glamorgan	1,964	3,061	225	33	5,283	37·2	57·9	4·3	0·6
Powys	455	619	48	9	1,131	40·2	54·7	4·2	0·8
South Glamorgan	1,466	1,616	149	19	3,250	45·1	49·7	4·6	0·6
West Glamorgan	1,348	1,921	103	15	3,387	39·8	56·7	3·0	0·4
Wales	10,533	14,232	968	181	25,914	40·6	54·9	3·7	0·7
England and Wales	167,514	211,276	17,877	6,196	402,863	41·6	52·4	4·4	1·5

[1] Trained teachers are those who have completed a course of initial teacher training in the United Kingdom. Untrained teachers may therefore include some trained outside the United Kingdom.

Table 3: Instructors and student teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools—January 1974

	Instructors and student teachers[1]	All teachers and instructors[1]	Instructors and student teachers as a percentage of all teachers and instructors
England	3,572·8	406,522·8	0·9
Wales	101·0	26,984·8	0·4
England and Wales	3,673·8	433,507·6	0·8

[1] Full-time equivalents.

Table 4: Full-time qualified teachers in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools by graduate status and teacher training—March 1974

	Numbers					Percentages			
	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]		Total	Trained[1]		Untrained[1]	
	Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates		Graduates	Non-graduates	Graduates	Non-graduates
England	69,796	275,722	21,268	13,022	379,808	18·4	72·6	5·6	3·4
Wales	5,691	18,566	1,135	517	25,909	22·0	71·7	4·4	2·0
England and Wales	75,487	294,288	22,403	13,539	405,717	18·6	72·5	5·5	3·2

[1] Trained teachers are those who have completed a course of initial teacher training in the United Kingdom. Untrained teachers may therefore include some trained outside the United Kingdom.

TRANSPORT

Nuclear Materials

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Council of Transport Ministers has received any report from the German Transport Minister, since January 1988, on irregularities discovered in the transfrontier transport of nuclear materials between the Federal Republic and Belgium.

Mr. Bottomley: We are not aware of such a report.

London Underground Ltd.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library documents or publications produced by London Underground Ltd. or its predecessors which set out the terms of employment and related matters now in dispute together with its proposals, or decisions in respect of future changes to them and a description of relevant negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This is a management matter for London Underground Limited.

Air Travel Organisers

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions were initiated by the Civil Aviation Authority in 1988 against unlicensed persons offering accommodation on charter flights from the United Kingdom in breach of the air travel organisers licensing system; how many were successful; and what was the average penalty or fine imposed for *(a)* first offence and *(b)* repeated offence.

Mr. Channon: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed the policing of the air travel organisers licensing system with the Civil Aviation Authority; and if he has any plans to ensure the tougher enforcement of the air travel organisers licensing regulations 1972.

Mr. Channon: The operation of these regulations is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has, I understand, been increasing the resources devoted to enforcing them over the last two years.

Automatic Ticket

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation to prevent the computing type functions that currently check tickets and control the gates of automatic ticket machines from being developed to monitor the movements of individuals through the use of personal details recorded on the magnetic strip found on the reverse side of season tickets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The matter of compliance with or enforcement of the Data Protection Act is a matter for the Data Protection Registrar.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has in relation to the instructions given to London Underground staff when congestion occurs at exit points controlled by automatic ticket machines during peak periods, and as to whether staff are instructed to open the gates of the machines to relieve congestion.

Mr. Portillo: Station staff have strict instructions to open the gates if there is any threat to safety from congestion building up behind them.

Radioactive Material

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year for the last 10 years how many tonnes of radioactive material was imported via each of the Humber ports; how many tonnes were exported through these ports; what method of transport was used to transport the material to and from the ports; and if he will make a statement on the future plans for transporting radioactive waste through the Humber ports.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not collect this information on a routine basis, but I am advised that the following shipments (in tonnes) were made through Immingham/Hull:

	Irradiated fuel imported	*Natural exported*	*UF6 imported*	*Enriched exported*	*UF6 imported*	*Fresh fuel exported*
1978	—	91	—	—	—	—
1979	—	180	—	—	—	3
1980	—	236	—	—	34	1
1981	2	285	—	—	31	2
1982	3	575	—	—	19	2
1983	5	859	—	10	35	—
1984	1	968	528	30	19	—
1985	2	260	960	44	17	2
1986	3	116	—	74	19	2
1987	2	1,066	—	152	—	2
1988	0·6	740	156	—	17	—

All movements to and from the ports were by road except irradiated fuel which travelled by rail.

Transatlantic Flights

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussion he has had with the United States Transportation Secretary at his meeting last week about new transatlantic flights out of Manchester airport; what was the outcome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend stressed that Her Majesty's Government are anxious to make progress on negotiations over traffic rights between United States cities and Manchester; we are prepared to do any size of mutually beneficial deal. The Transportation Secretary promised that his Department and the State Department would now prepare themselves for another round of negotiations.

Traffic Surveys (London)

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will detail the objectives of his Department's central London traffic surveys;

(2) what will be the estimated cost of his Department's central London traffic surveys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Statistical surveys of traffic are undertaken on a regular basis in London in order to monitor trends in average flows and speeds. Full details are given in the Department's "Statistical Bulletin (88) 39" which is available in the Library. The costs of these surveys are not recorded separately for the central London area, but for London as a whole the total cost for the two-year period to March 1989 was £370,000.

In addition, statistical surveys are carried out for the development of proposals for road improvements. The Department carried out surveys for this purpose last month on the A13 trunk road in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham. The estimated cost of these surveys is £200,000.

Vehicles

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles, and of what value, were purchased by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* British Rail and *(c)* other public sector agencies for which he is responsible in 1988; and how many of these vehicles were British made within the definition of British as set out by the Department of Trade and Industry in its arrangement on content with the European Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 17 April 1989]:* The Department of Transport purchased 24 new vehicles in 1988—mostly for research or other specialist use—at a cost of £737,472. Eleven of these vehicles were United Kingdom-produced, on the definition employed by the DTI for statistical purposes, under which a vehicle is

classified as United Kingdom-produced if the United Kingdom content exceeds 50 per cent. of the ex-works value. These figures do not include second-hand cars used for impact studies, which are purchased at minimum cost.

Details of vehicles purchased by British Rail or other sponsored bodies are not available within the Department.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rain Forests

113. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to have rain forest issues and policy on the financing of nuclear power stations included on the agenda of the next meeting of the World Bank.

Mr. Chris Patten: The development committee of the IMF/IBRD has already agreed to discuss environmental issues at its next meeting in September. Meanwhile, the World Bank is intensifying its work on these issues, including its role in the tropical forestry action plan.

The role of nuclear power is considered within the energy development plans of a few IBRD borrowing countries but its cost, high technology and demand on scarce human resources make it generally inappropriate at present for the vast majority of developing countries.

Third-world Debt

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at what conferences dealing with Third-world debt reduction his Department has been represented in 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Chalker: The FCO has been represented at international conferences which discussed debt reduction at UNCTAD in September 1988, the IMF and IBRD annual meetings in Berlin in September 1988 and the spring meetings of the IMF and IBRD in April this year. It has also been represented at a variety of meetings organised by research, academic and private sector groups.

Southern Africa

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations his Department has received from international bodies in relation to a possible role for Britain in finding solutions to the problems of southern Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

South Africa

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during the recent visit of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of South Africa, he discussed the prospects of South Africa joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend stressed the importance of South Africa joining the NPT as soon as possible.

Ethiopia

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commowealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have yet received the considered response from the Ethiopian Government on human rights concerns which they await.

Mrs. Chalker: No. We shall continue to press the Ethiopian Government on all human rights issues.

Bophuthatswana

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will recognise the state of Bophuthatswana as a self-governing country with a right of recognition similar to that of Swaziland.

Mrs. Chalker: No. Bophuthatswana is a homeland within the Republic of South Africa. Swaziland is an independent country.

EC Directives

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many European Community directives have been implemented in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) on 15 February, at col. *203*.

Departmental Policy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the successes of implementation of policy by Her Majesty's Government in foreign policy since May 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 2 May, at col. *34* to the question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the failures in his Department's policy implementation since May 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer of 28 April at col. *710* of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

China

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's Ambassador to the People's Republic of China on recent student and workers unrest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received regular reports from Her Majesty's Ambassador in Peking on the recent unrest in China. We are continuing to follow developments closely.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (World Health Organisation Status)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the application by the Palestine Liberation Organisation for its observer status at the World Health Organisation to be turned into full membership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are in close touch with a wide range of fellow members of the World Health Organisation, including European Community and western partners in Geneva.

The 12 member states of the European Community have made their position clear in a formal note to the director general of the World Health Organisation. No member of the European Community has recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation/Palestine as a state. Accordingly, we do not accept that the Palestine Liberation Organisation satisfies the criteria for membership of the World Health Organisation.

We have also strongly advised the Palestine Liberation Organisation not to pursue its application.

Death Penalty

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Amnesty International concerning the death penalty overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have on a number of occasions received representations from Amnesty International concerning particular cases involving the death penalty in various countries. We have recently received copies of Amnesty's new report on the death penalty worldwide. We are studying its contents carefully.

Turkey

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning Turkey's entry to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received a number of representations concerning Turkey's application to join the European Community. The application is currently being studied by the Commission. Once its opinion is available, the Council of Ministers will consider the application further. We shall take all relevant factors into consideration when assessing the application in the Council.

International Monetary Fund

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement explaining the criteria upon which he bases his decision whether or not to support an individual country's application to join the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Eggar: Membership of the International Monetary Fund is open to every state that is prepared to fulfil the obligations of membership contained in the International Monetary Fund's articles of agreement (a copy of which is in the Library). That is the criterion on which we base our decision.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he has been notified of any formal application submitted by the Angolan MPLA regime to join the International Monetary Fund; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations have been made to him by the MPLA regime of Angola concerning any application which it may be making to the International Monetary Fund;

(3) whether it is his policy to establish pre-conditions before supporting the acceptance by the International Monetary Fund of any application for membership made by the MPLA-PT regime of Angola; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether he has any information about the likely date upon which any final decision may be reached by the International Monetary Fund upon any application for membership which it is currently considering from the Angolan MPLA regime;

(5) whether it is his policy to have discussions with the United States of America concerning any application for membership which may be made to the International Monetary Fund by the Angolan MPLA regime; and whether he has any information concerning United States' policy towards any such application.

Mr. Eggar: Angola formally applied to join the International Monetary Fund in October 1987. We have told the Angolan Government that we support their application in principle and consider that it should be dealt with on it technical merits. We understand that the IMF executive board is likely to make a decision on the application in the next few months. United States' policy is a matter for the United States Government but they are well aware of our view that Angola's attempts to improve its relations with the West should be encouraged. We will be restating this at the meeting of the membership sub-committee currently considering Angola's application for membership.

WALES

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Tenby north, *(b)* Abersoch, *(c)* Llandudno west shore of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewerage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewerage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Grist: The authority is currently reviewing its programme of remedial works, which aims to achieve compliance of all listed waters. The full cost of the programme has yet to be evaluated.

General Practitioners

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many general practitioners worked for the National Health Service in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Pembrokeshire in each year since 1959;

(2) what was the average number of people registered with each National Health Service general practitioner in each year since 1959 in *(a)* Pembrokeshire and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* The available information is given in the following table:

	Number of unrestricted principals at 1 October		Average list size	
	Pembrokeshire Executive Committee	Wales	Pembrokeshire Executive Committee	Wales
1959[1]	n/a	1,264	n/a	2,045
1960[1]	n/a	1,271	n/a	2,047
1961	51	1,270	n/a	2,067
1962	n/a	1,281	n/a	2,061
1963	45	1,270	n/a	2,093
1964	48	1,254	n/a	2,136
1965	45	1,230	n/a	2,192
1966	45	1,220	n/a	2,219
1967	44	1,220	n/a	2,229
1968	45	1,225	n/a	2,231
1969	48	1,232	2,068	2,232
1970	48	1,258	2,069	2,192
1971	48	1,259	2,048	2,203
1972	52	1,269	1,908	2,198
1973	52	1,269	1,940	2,207

[1] As at 1 July.

	Dyfed Family[1] Practitioner Committee	Wales	Dyfed Family[1] Practitioner Committee	Wales
1974	160	1,291	2,051	2,189
1975	162	1,290	2,028	2,193
1976	161	1,286	2,063	2,199
1977	161	1,304	2,062	2,175
1978	163	1,323	2,019	2,302
1979	166	1,339	2,019	2,277
1980	169	1,372	2,000	2,086
1981	172	1,397	1,958	2,057
1982	180	1,431	1,885	2,013
1983	182	1,465	1,864	1,975
1984	188	1,492	1,811	1,946
1985	194	1,523	1,770	1,914
1986	197	1,549	1,750	1,881
1987	205	1,587	1,699	1,849

[1]Family practitioner committees took over from executive councils in 1974. Figures are no longer available centrally for Pembrokeshire, but are subsumed in the Dyfed family practitioner committee total.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat; if he will give for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein; and if he will express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows. In addition, my Department also commissions research with the Agricultural and Food Research Council and universities, which are the responsibilities of the Department of Education and Science, food research associations and others.

	Number of staff	Regional totals[1]
Northern		
Experimental Husbandry Farm: Redesdale	15½	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Newcastle	14	
Penrith	14	
Directorate of Fisheries research: Fisheries Radiobiological Laboratory, Whitehaven	3	—
Total staff	46½	2
Number of Units	4	7
North West		
Veterinary Investigation Centre: Barton Hall	15	—
Total staff	15	1
Number of Units	1	2
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Experimental Husbandry Farm: High Mowthorpe	26½	—
Experimental Horticulture Station: Stockbridge House	57½	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre: Thirsk	13½	—
Total staff	97½	4
Number of Units	3	5
East Midlands		
Expeerimental Husbandry Farm: Gleadthorpe	43½	—
Exprimental Horticulture Station: Kirton	29	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Lincoln	18	—
Sutton Bonington	15	—
Total staff	105½	5
Number of Units	4	7
West Midlands		
Experimental Husbandry Farm:		
Drayton	21½	—
Rosemaund	25	—
Experimental Horticulture Station: Luddington	47	—
Experimental Unit: Feed Evaluation Unit, Drayton	8	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Shrewsbury	16	—
Worcester	20	—
Total Staff	137½	6
Number of Units	6	10
East Anglia		
Experimental Husbandry Farm:		
Arthur Rickwood	21	—
Boxworth	16½	—
Terrington	27½	—
Experimental Unit: Field Drainage Experimental Unit, Cambridge	17	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Cambridge	15	—
Norwich	15	—
ADAS Central Science Laboratories: Norwich	5	—
Food Science Laboratories: Norwich	43½	—
Directorate of Fisheries Research, Lowestoft	331½	—
Total staff	492	21
Number of units	9	15
South East		
Experimental Husbandry Farm: Bridgets	30	—
Experimental Horticulture Station:		
National Fruit Trials	28	—
Efford	54	—
Mushroom unit: Littlehampton	2	—

	Number of staff	Regional totals[1]
Experimental Unit: Farm Buildings Development Centre, Reading	4	—
ADAS Central Science Laboratories:		
Harpenden	105½	—
Slough	131½	—
Tolworth	40	—
Worplesdon	29	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Winchester	10	—
Reading	15	—
Wye	10	—
Central Veterinary Laboratory: Weybridge	498	—
Central Veterinary Laboratory: Farringdon/Shinfield Cattle Breeding Centre	32½	—
Food Science Laboratories: London	14½	—
Directorate of Fisheries Research: Fisheries Laboratory, Burnham	43½	—
Total staff	1,047½	46
Number of units	16	28
South West		
Experimental Husbandry Farm: Liscombe	19½	—
Experimental Horticulture Station: Rosewarne	38½	—
Sub-station: Isles of Scilly	1	—
ADAS Central Science Laboratories: Woodchester Park	5	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Langford	18	—
Starcross	14	—
Truro	12	—
Directorate of Fisheries Research: Fish Disease Laboratory, Weymouth	25	—
Total staff	133	6
Number of units	8	14
Wales		
Experimental Husbandry Farm: Pwllpeiran and Trawsgoed	38	—
Veterinary Investigation Centre:		
Aberystwyth	11	—
Bangor	10	—
Carmarthen	14	—
Directorate of Fisheries Research: Fisheries Experimental Station, Conwy	19	—
Total staff	92	4
Number of units	5	9
Scotland		
Central Veterinary Laboratory: Lasswade	18	—
Torry Research Station, Aberdeen	112	—
Total staff	130	5
Number of units	2	3

[1] As a percentage of national total.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the research being sponsored by his Department into bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other transmissable encephalopathies.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department currently funds research on BSE at its central veterinary laboratory at Weybridge which covers epidemiological studies, clinico-pathology, transmission experiments using a number of animal species, chemical pathology, genetics and semen collection.

The cost of this work in 1988-89 was £764,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

5. **Mr. Ted Leadbitter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his target rate of inflation for 12 months' time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The FSBR forecast that the inflation rate as measured by the RPI would be down to 4½ per cent. by the second quarter of 1990.

12. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the countries of the Group of Seven whose inflation rates, including an estimate of housing costs, are below that of Great Britain.

46. **Mr. Young:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the countries of the Group of Seven whose inflation rates, including an estimate of housing costs, are below that of Great Britain.

Mr. Lilley: Only Canada treats owner-occupier housing costs in its measure of consumer price inflation in a similar way to the UK. The overall inflation rate in Canada is currently below that in the UK.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the level of inflation to come down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley The 1989 FSBR forecasts that inflation will be 5½ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1989.

52. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is his target rate of inflation for April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Government do not set specific short-term targets for the rate of inflation. Tight monetary policy will ensure that inflation moderates from its current level. My right Hon. Friend forecast in his Budget statement that the RPI inflation rate would be 5½ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1989, and 4½ per cent. in the second quarter of 1990.

42. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the countries of the EEC whose inflation rates, including an estimate of housing costs, are below that of Great Britain.

77. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the countries of the EEC whose inflation rates, including an estimate of housing costs, are below that of Great Britain.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the countries of the EEC whose inflation rates, including an estimate of housing costs, are below that of Great Britain.

Mr. Lilley: Only Ireland treats owner-occupier housing costs in its measure of consumer price inflation in a similar way to the United Kingdom. The overall inflation rate in Ireland is currently below that in the United Kingdom.

31. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation.

112. **Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Lilley: The all-items RPI inflation rate was 7·9 per cent. in March; the underlying rate (excluding mortgage interest payments) was 5·7 per cent.

Group of Seven

15. **Mr. Iain Mills:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and what will be discussed.

Mr. Lawson: At the economic summit in Paris in July.

41. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven countries; and what subjects were discussed.

91. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 6 April, at column *259*.

35. **Mr. Budgen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and what will be discussed.

71. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and what will be discussed.

107. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet with his counterparts in the Group of Seven; and what matters are due to be discussed.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills).

Equal Opportunities Commission

18. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives from the Equal Opportunities Commission concerning the 1989 Budget; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission recently.

National Debt

20. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net repayment of debt by the Government in 1988-89.

26. **Mr. Brandon Bravo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of public sector debt repayment in the last year for which figures are available; and what this represented as a percentage of gross domestic product.

79. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of public sector debt repayment in the last year for which figures are available; and what this represented as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Lilley: The public sector debt repayment in 1988-89 is provisionally estimated at £14·3 billion, equivalent to 3 per cent. of GDP.

57. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated saving in interest payments as a result of the public sector debt repayment over the last two years.

83. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated saving in interest payments as a result of the public sector debt repayment over the last two years.

104. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated saving in interest payments as a result of the public sector debt repayment over the last two years.

Mr. Lilley: The total public sector debt repayment in 1987-88 and 1988-89 was £17·8 billion. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget statement, this is expected to reduce net debt interest costs by over £1·5 billion a year.

36. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the national debt has been paid off since June 1987.

72. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the national debt has been paid off since June 1987.

82. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the national debt has been paid off since June 1987.

Mr. Lilley: The public sector debt repayment totalled £19·7 billion between June 1987 and March 1989.

Take-home Pay

21. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the real take-home pay of a man on average male earnings between 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts).

Labour Statistics

22. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in registered unemployment since June 1987.

70. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in registered unemployment since June 1987.

Mr. Major: Unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen by 939,000 since June 1987.

23. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in total employment since June 1987.

Mr. Major: Total employment in the United Kingdom has increased by 1,152,000 since June 1987.

Productivity

24. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average increase in productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

Mr. Lilley: Whole economy productivity has increased, on average, by 2·5 per cent. a year since 1980, faster than any other major industrialised country apart from Japan.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average increase in productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind).

59. **Mr. Allen Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average increase in productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

73. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average increase in productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

98. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average increase in productivity for the whole economy since 1980.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind).

49. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of manufacturing productivity in the economy.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle).

Child Poverty Action Group

25. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives from the Child Poverty Action Group: and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives from the Child Poverty Action Group, although he has seen their Budget representation.

97. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives from the Child Poverty Action Group; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

Company Profitability

27. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the profitability of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies in the latest year for which figures are available.

95. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rise in the profitability of non-North sea industrial and commercial companies in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The net real rate of return for non-North sea industrial and commercial companies was estimated in the Financial Statement and Budget Report to have risen in 1988 to almost 11 per cent., its highest level for over 20 years.

Shareholders

28. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

50. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total number of shareholders in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

Government Expenditure

29. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1982-83.

74. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the fall in general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, as a percentage of gross domestic product since 1982-83.

Mr. Major: The 1989 Financial Statement and Budget Report gave a figure of 39½ per cent. for the ratio of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to gross domestic product in 1988-89. The corresponding figure for 1982-83 was 46¾ per cent.

Balance of Trade

30. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the balance of trade in manufacturing for the current year.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on 19 April, at column *168*.

48. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the balance of trade deficit in the current year.

94. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the balance of trade deficit in the current year.

100. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the balance of trade deficit in 1989.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 19 April, at column *168*.

45. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect current interest rates are having on the balance of trade.

Mr. Major: The current level of interest rates is designed to slow the growth of domestic demand. The effects of this tighter monetary policy are already apparent in, for example, recent figures for MO, retail sales and the housing market. In time, the current account deficit will also start to narrow.

43. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the United Kingdom's current trade deficit.

Mr. Major: The present trade deficit has primarily reflected the strength of domestic demand, particularly investment. The Government responded appropriately by tightening monetary policy and the effects of this are already apparent—for example, in recent figures for MO, retail sales and the housing market. As the growth of domestic demand slows, so the monthly current account and trade deficits are expected to fall.

Exchange Rate Policy

32. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current exchange rate policy.

63. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current exchange rate policy.

88. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current exchange rate policy.

Mr. Peter Lilley: My right hon. Friend set out the Government's policy in his Budget speech, at column 296.

Interest Rates

33. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding the level of interest rates.

84. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding interest rates.

86. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject.

Balance of Payments

34. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on his balance of payments forecast included in the current year's Budget statement.

110. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on his balance of payments forecast included in the 1989 Budget statement.

Mr. Major: None.

Employee Share Ownership

37. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the introduction of tax relief for employee share ownership.

40. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the introduction of tax relief for employee share ownership.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tax reliefs encouraging the spread of employee share ownership have been in operation for up to 10 years and have enjoyed great success. A wide variety of representations and suggestions on the subject have been made over this period and have contributed to the many improvements introduced in nine out of the last 10 Budgets, and notably in that presented seven weeks ago.

Company Car Taxation

38. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning the proposed increase in company car taxation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received about 50 representations concerning the proposed increase in the car benefit scale charges announced in the Budget.

International Monetary Fund and World Bank

39. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund; and what was discussed.

47. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the International Monetary Fund; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt).

87. **Mr. Ilsley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Lilley: A wide range of matters was discussed, as set out in the interim and development committee communiqués, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

56. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the World Bank; and what was discussed.

93. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of the World Bank; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met the president of the World Bank in London on 26 April and discussed a wide range of issues.

EC (Economic and Monetary Union)

44. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about his response to the Delors committee report on economic and monetary union in the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 21 April, at column *327*, and to the exchange between my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) on 18 April, at column 181.

Pensioners

51. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the abolition of the earnings rule for pensioners announced in his Budget.

66. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the abolition of the earnings rule for retirement pensioners which he announced in his Budget.

101. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the abolition of the earnings rule for pensioners which he announced in his Budget.

Mr. Major: The abolition of the pensioners earnings rule was widely welcomed by interested individuals and organisations. In particular, the director general of Help the Aged wrote to my right hon. Friend after the Budget statement to record his appreciation of this and other Budget measures to help pensioners.

58. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives from retirement pensioners' groups; and what matters he expects to discuss.

69. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives from pensioners' groups; and what matters he expects to discuss.

111. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives from pensioners' groups.

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to meet representatives from pensioners groups.

Visible Imports and Exports

53. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for visible imports and exports in the current year.

68. **Mr Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for visible imports and exports in the current year.

90. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for visible imports and exports in the current year.

Mr. Major: The Financial Statement and Budget Report for 1989-90 shows a forecast for the volume growth in both visible exports and visible imports in 1989 of 5½ per cent. Forecasts of the value of visible exports and imports in 1989 are not published.

European Finance Ministers

54. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last attended a meeting of European Finance Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 21 April 1989, at column *327*.

Small Business

55. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the impact of interest rate rises since 1988 on small businesses.

102. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of interest rate rises since 1988 on small businesses.

105. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the impact of interest rate rises since last year on small businesses.

Mr. Peter Lilley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett).

Child Care

60. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the taxation of the use of child care facilities.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on the taxation of the benefit to employees of subsidised workplace nursery facilities.

Business Investment

61. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of business investment in the economy.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw).

Contingency Reserve

62. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what allocations from the contingency reserve he is currently considering.

Mr. Major: Additions to programmes from the 1989-90 reserve have been, and will continue to be, announced after they are agreed.

Money Supply

64. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the increase of MO.

Mr. Lilley: In the year to March 1989 MO grew by 6·2 per cent. in seasonally adjusted terms. Of this rise, 6 per cent. occurred in the six months to September. Since then the increase has been only 0·2 per cent. Though the postal dispute in the autumn may have affected the figures to some extent, there has clearly been a marked slowdown.

VAT

65. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated annual yield on value added tax levied on hospital radio broadcasting equipment.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 20 February, at column *479*.

Private Medical Treatment (Tax Relief)

67. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning his proposal to offer private medical tax relief.

96. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning his proposal to offer private medical tax relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) earlier today.

Institute for International Economics

75. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Treasury officials last met representatives from the Institute for International Economics; and what matters were discussed.

92. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Treasury officials last met representatives from the Institute for International Economics; and what matters were discussed.

109. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Treasury officials last met with representatives from the Institute for International Economics; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Major: Treasury officials met three members of the institute on 13 April to discuss a number of international economic issues.

Job Creation

76. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in total employment since June 1987.

Mr. Major: Total employment in the United Kingdom has increased by 1,152,000 since June 1987.

Drink and Tobacco Duty

78. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the reduction in taxation revenue in the event of the proposals for harmonised duties on drink and tobacco, as proposed by the Commission, being implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Given the very large changes in taxation that the Commission's proposals would require, any estimates are subject to wide margins of error. In addition, the Government have made it clear on numerous occasions that they do not consider tax approximation to be necessary for the completion of the internal market, and implementation of the Commission's proposals would require unanimous agreement of the member states. With those qualifications, the latest estimate of the revenue loss in a full year from adoption of the Commission's proposals on drink and tobacco is some £3·9 billion.

National Insurance

80. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the changes in employees' national insurance contributions announced in his Budget.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has received on the changes in employees' national insurance contributions announced in his Budget.

Mr. Lawson: The reforms of national insurance contributions that I announced in my Budget have been widely welcomed.

Personal Disposable Income

81. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the annual average rate of growth of real personal disposable income since 1983.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson).

Business Expenses

85. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last considered raising the figure at which employers have to declare to the Inland Revenue the salaries, benefits and business expenses of employees and directors.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the return of expenses and benefits which employers are required to make for directors and employees earning at a rate of £8,500 a year or more. All aspects of the tax system are kept under review. But the Government have at no time sought to increase the £8,500 threshold at which employees pay tax on benefits in kind since in principle all employees should pay income tax on the whole of their earnings whether received in cash or in kind.

Budget Forecast (Error)

89. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what he attributes the error in his forecast of the current balance for 1988, made in his 1988 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Mr. Major: As noted in this year's Financial Statement and Budget Report, the difference between the published estimate of the current balance for 1988 and the forecast for 1988 made in last year's FSBR mainly reflected the unexpected strength of domestic demand, particularly investment, combined with very high levels of capacity utilisation in some industries.

Drug Smuggling

99. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what resources are now devoted by Her Majesty's customs to the prevention and detection of drug smuggling; what were the totals of class A and class B drugs seized in 1988; and what were the comparable figures for previous years.

Mr. Lilley: From April 1986 to April 1988 the number of Customs officers mainly engaged in the prevention of drug smuggling rose from 2,958 to 3,565, an increase of 20·5 per cent. 412·3kg of class A drugs were seized by Customs in 1985-86, 269·5kg in 1986-87 and 706·8kg in 1987-88, an increase of 71 per cent. over the period. The corresponding figures for class B drugs were 21,744kg in 1985-86, 20,231kg in 1986-87 and 23,448kg in 1987-88; an increase of 8 per cent. over the two years.

Third World Debt

103. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest Group of Seven initiative on Third world debt.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven discussed Third world debt in Washington on 2 April. A copy of the press statement is available in the Library of the House, together with a copy of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's remarks to the IMF interim committee on 3 April.

Foreign Investment

106 **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the net flows of foreign investment into the United Kingdom in the form of *(a)* long-term direct investment and *(b)* short-term banking flows.

108 **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the net flows of foreign investment into the United Kingdom in the form of *(a)* long-term direct investment and *(b)* short-term banking flows.

Mr. Major: The most recent information on flows of direct investment and banking inflows into the United Kingdom has been published by the CSO in the March edition of *Economic Trends*. However, it is not possible to distinguish between long-term and short-term flows.

All-seater Football Grounds

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a levy on the football pools to pay for major football grounds to install all-seating arrangements.

Mr. Lilley: Pools promoters make substantial payments, akin to a voluntary levy, to the Football Trust. The Government have no intention of introducing a statutory levy.

Football Pools

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount *(a)* staked on football pools in each of the past three years and *(b)* paid to the Government in tax in each of the past three years.

Mr. Lilley: Following is the information:

Pool Betting (£ million)

	Stakes	*Duty*
1986-87	598·2	254·2
1987-88	647·5	275·2
1988-89	656·1	278·9

Reply Paid Envelopes

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Departments issue reply paid envelopes to those required to supply information by law to the Executive; and what changes in policy there have been since 1979 in the issuing of reply-paid envelopes.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* There is no central policy. It is for individual Departments to decide whether it is appropriate for the cost of replies to official correspondence to fall on the sender or the general taxpayer. Information on current departmental practice is not held centrally.

Investment and Consumption

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what has been the rate of growth of *(a)* total investment and *(b)* total consumption over the past seven years.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier).

Additionality

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in relation to the system of additionality, by which public bodies in the United Kingdom receiving EEC money have United Kingdom taxpayers' money commensurately deducted.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Receipts from the European Community budget are taken into account each year when the United Kingdom's public expenditure plans are decided. This enables United Kingdom public spending programmes to be set and maintained at higher levels than would otherwise have been possible.

SCOTLAND

Council House Sales

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the current monthly level of council house sales in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information returned to the Scottish Development Department shows that between October and December 1988 Scottish local authorities sold an average of 2,200 dwellings a month. Figures of sales in the first quarter of 1989 are not yet available.

Speech Therapists

Mr Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many speech therapists are available for Scottish schools; and of these how many are employed *(a)* in Strathclyde and *(b)* in Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not held centrally in the form requested.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the schools in Glasgow to which speech therapy services are provided, showing the number of pupils requiring this service in each school, the number of hours of service provided to each school and the average hours given to each pupil in need.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which authorities in Scotland have statutory responsibilities for supply of speech therapists to Scottish schools; what recent discussions he has had with them; and if he will make a statement on Government policy on this matter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Statutory responsibility rests with education authorities to secure the provision of speech therapy for children whose record of needs specifies that requirement. The service is almost exclusively provided by speech therapists employed by health boards. In February last year I met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss therapy services, including speech therapy services, for school children, and in March I met the chairmen of health boards who undertook to review the provision of services in their areas. I have repeatedly encouraged joint assessment and planning of services and in November 1988 published a planning council report about planning effective speech therapy services.

Charities

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish his conclusions on the responses to the consultative memorandum on the supervision of charities in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Soon.

Dornoch Firth (Rail Crossing)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next anticipates discussing with the chairman of British Rail the construction of a rail crossing of the Dornoch firth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Forestry Policy

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations on forestry policy in the European Community.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A common forestry policy as such is not being negotiated in the European Community. However, negotiations on a proposed forestry action programme are approaching their final stages, and the main United Kingdom objectives are likely to be met.

Forestry Commission

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, when appointing Raymond Johnston to the position of chairman of the Forestry Commission, consideration was given to the possibility of preparing the Forestry Commission for sale.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Rent-as-you-buy Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to announce a rent-as-you-buy scheme for council tenants in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Electoral Register

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the percentage change in the numbers on local government electoral registers between 1987 and 1989 in *(a)* Edinburgh city and *(b)* Glasgow city; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to table 3 in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys "Monitor EL87/1" and to table 1 in the "Monitor EL89/1", from which the percentage changes may be derived. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the percentage change in the numbers on parliamentary electoral registers between 1987 and 1989 in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The change was 4·1 per cent. in Aberdeen, 2·2 per cent. in Dundee, 2·4 per cent. in Edinburgh and 4·4 per cent. in Glasgow.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire North-East of 27 April, if he will list the estimated percentages of 16 and 17-year-olds missing from electoral registers as potential first-time voters in each constituency in Scotland in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information in the form requested is not available because population estimates are not calculated on a constituency basis. The estimated percentages for Scotland as a whole in 1987, 1988 and 1989 were 26, 27 and 26, respectively.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East of 27 April, whether he has any plans to increase the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds whose names are included as potential voters on electoral registers in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee;

(2) what plans he has to improve electoral registration in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The preparation of electoral registers is the statutory duty of the electoral registration officers for the areas concerned. My right hon. and learned Friend is confident that their aim is to produce as comprehensive and accurate a register as possible, and proposes to support them as before with appropriate publicity campaigns.

Scottish Educational Trust for UN and International Affairs

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the Government's policy towards the Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what contribution the Scottish Education Department has made to the 1989-90 publications list produced by the Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Education Department has made no contribution to the 1989-90 publication list produced by the Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs. The trust's aims and activities do not come within current priorities for educational research-related funding.

PRIME MINISTER

Child Sexual Abuse

Q11. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will establish an interdepartmental committee to examine the sexual abuse of children.

The Prime Minister: There is already in existence the inter-departmental group on child abuse, comprising senior officials in Departments with responsibilities for children. It was established to develop an inter-departmental approach to child abuse, including child sexual abuse.

Rain Forests

Q77. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what further action Her Majesty's Government are taking to halt the destruction of the world's tropical rain forests.

The Prime Minister: As part of the forestry initiative the Overseas Development Administration has identified more than 20 countries where we are well placed to help. Discussions are already under way with, for example, the Government of Brazil and India; we have just agreed £40 million of new aid for India largely for the local costs of forestry projects. In addition the Overseas Development Administration is increasing its funding for forestry research and is encouraging British charities to put forward more forestry projects for joint funding. We shall be encouraging multilateral and other bilateral donors to increase their support for the sector.

Monetary Union

Q106. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding proposals for monetary union in the EEC.

Q156. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding proposals for monetary union in the European Economic Community.

Q157. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding proposals for monetary union in the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations on this subject.

Namibia

Q119. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the process of independence in Namibia.

The Prime Minister: We remain fully committed to the implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence. We are urging all those concerned to comply fully with the terms of the United Nations plan.

EEC Commission President

Q123. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next plans to meet the President of the European Economic Community Commission.

The Prime Minister: I expect to meet the President of the EC Commission at the meeting of the European Council on 26 and 27 June.

Low-Income Households

Q153. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the number of low-income households in Mountain Ash.

The Prime Minister: This information is not available.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 4 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Female Legal Staff

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many female *(a)* barristers, *(b)* magistrates, *(c)* solicitors, *(d)* judges, *(e)* recorders and *(f)* court clerks are (i) employed and (ii) qualified in the United Kingdom according to the latest available figures.

The Attorney-General: Such figures as are available for England and Wales are as follows:

(a) Barristers

As at 1 October 1988 there were 940 women practising barristers. In addition, 309 women employed barristers are recorded as paying the Bar subscription, giving a total of 1,249 known active women barristers.

(b) Magistrates

As at 1 January 1989 there were 12,214 women lay magistrates. In addition, there are eight women full-time metropolitan stipendiary magistrates; four women acting metropolitan stipendiary magistrates; and three women acting provincial stipendiary magistrates.

(c) Solicitors

In 1987-88 (the latest period for which figures are available), 10,062 women solicitors held practising certificates. In 1988, there were 13,046 women solicitors on the roll.

(d) Judges

There is one woman lord justice of appeal, one woman High Court judge, and there are 17 women Circuit judges.

(e) Recorders

There are 29 women recorders.

(f) Court Clerks

As at 31 December 1988 there were 12 women clerks to the justices. There are, in addition, 112 women chief clerks of Crown and County courts.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Balance of Trade

114. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the balance of manufactured trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Allen Adams: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the balance of manufactured trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

116. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the balance of manufactured trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

117. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the balance of manufactured trade in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: Trade in manufactures on a balance of payments basis was in surplus by £5·1 billion in 1978 and in deficit by £14·4 billion in 1988.

Imports

118. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the proportion of total manufacturing imports represented by production and investment goods in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1988.

119. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the proportion of total manufacturing imports represented by production and investment goods in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the proportion of total manufacturing imports represented by production and investment goods in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The proportion of United Kingdom imports of manufactures on an *Overseas Trade Statistics* basis represented by production and investment goods was as follows:

	Per cent.
1984	76
1988	75

Notes:
(1) The figures exclude the more erratic items—ships, North sea oil installations, aircraft, precious stones and silver.
(2) Production and investment goods are taken to be semi-manufactures (SITC 5 and 6) plus intermediate finished manufactures and investment goods (part of SITC 7 and 8, based on the United Nations broad economic categories).

Poland (Investment)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the renewed legalisation of Solidarnosc in Poland will affect United Kingdom export credit guarantees for industrial investment in Poland.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* The Government welcome many of the political and structural changes taking place in Poland. However, there will need to be a clear improvement in the economic situation too before any resumption of medium term export credit guarantees can be justified.

It is hoped that Poland can reach agreement with the IMF on an adjustment programme that can lead to such economic improvements. The Government intend to play a constructive role in seeking to establish an agreement between Poland and the IMF.

ECGD short-term credit guarantees, and investment insurance against war and expropriation risks, continue to be available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Internal Market

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the total value to the latest available full year of public sector contracts in Northern Ireland of a character which will make them open to Communitywide bidding as part of the creation of the internal market.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The cost of assessing the value of public sector contracts in Northern Ireland to be opened to Community-wide bidding would not be justified. The EC is currently investigating the effects of applying procurement rules to contracts above various value thresholds in sectors excluded from existing Community directives.

Rates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on measures to reduce the rate of increase in regional rates.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 20 April, at columns 447-48 to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). Two exceptional factors, the change in Exchequer support and the one-off credit balance in 1988-89 together accounted for 6·6 per cent. out of the 12·6 per cent. increase in the 1989-90 regional rate. The remaining 6 per cent. reflected substantial increases in public expenditure programmes in Northern Ireland in areas such as education and roads maintenance. The level of the Government support for rate relevant expenditure in Northern Ireland is at a very high level, 82 per cent. compared with 43 per cent. in England. The Government endeavour to strike a reasonable balance between the need for expenditure on central Government rate-borne services in Northern Ireland and the burden placed on ratepayers. However, the only practical way to reduce the impact upon ratepayers would be to reduce relevant public expenditure programmes in Northern Ireland.

Mater Infirmorum Hospital, Belfast

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether the Mater Infirmorum hospital, Belfast, will become the main centre for gynaecology in central Belfast if the proposals of the complementarity study of the Eastern health and social services board are implemented;

(2) what assessment has been made of whether the Mater hospital can provide a full range of care;

(3) what steps are being taken to ensure that the Mater hospital can provide a service with regard to artificial techniques of contraception, sterilisation, tubal ligation, and related areas;

(4) what steps are being taken to ensure equal provision for women seeking care on a non-denominational basis under the proposals of the complementarity study of the Eastern health board;

(5) what representations he has received suggesting that the proposals of the Eastern health board's complementarity study have not taken account of the special characteristics of the Mater hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The proposals for changes in the provision of acute services by the three Belfast teaching hospitals stem from the recent complementarity study report. The Eastern health and social services board has yet to decide how it wishes to proceed with the study recommendations. When it does I will wish to discuss the conclusions very fully with the board chairman.

Health Education

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the budget for health education in Northern Ireland for each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88, expressed as actual expenditure and as a percentage of total National Health Service spending in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available in the form requested as many of the services provided by health and social services boards include an element of health education which is not funded separately.

Details of the Department of Health and Social Services budget spent directly on centrally financed health education are given in the table. This consists of the Northern Ireland pro rata contribution to the former Health Education Council and an additional £200,000 in 1987-88 to fund the launch of the "Northern Ireland Change of Heart" coronary prevention programme.

	£
1978-79	51,000
1979-80	106,000
1980-81	152,000
1981-82	200,000
1982-83	249,000
1983-84	257,000
1984-85	265,000
1985-86	270,000
1986-87	278,000
1987-88	491,000

Pre-School Education

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the percentage of children of pre-school age currently enrolled in state-run pre-school education in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	All grant-aided schools[1] *per cent.*
Pre school age pupils in nursery education[2]	13·3
Three and four-year-olds in Education[3]	45·4

[1] Both figures are expressed as a percentage of the three and four-year-old population at January 1988.

[2] Includes nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools.

[3] Covers all three and four-year-olds in education, including those in nursery schools and nursery classes but excluding those in special schools.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available, for each social security office, on the highest and lowest month for social fund applications and allocations, indicating the relevant respective figures.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information about the number of applications processed and the amounts awarded in each month is available in the Library.

Information about the highest and lowest month for social fund applications for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 (the latest date for which information is available) is as follows:

Highest and Lowest Number of Social Fund Applications: 11 April 1988—31 March 1989

Social Security Office	*Lowest*		*Highest*	
	Month	*Total*	*Month*	*Total*
Andersonstown	May	112	February	1,959
Antrim	July	346	November	653
Armagh	May	95	March	334
Ballymena	May	293	February	526
Ballymoney	May	81	March	246
Ballynahinch	May	26	March	78
Banbridge	May	55	March	249
Bangor	May	124	March	263
Carrickfergus	May	117	February	267
Coleraine	May	196	November	463
Cookstown	May	95	March	317
Corporation Street	July	305	March	1,851
Downpatrick	May	105	November	266
Dungannon	May	88	November	436
Enniskillen	May	93	March	445
Falls	December	437	February	1,210
Holywood Road	May	257	March	842
Kilkeel	May	22	March	70
Knockbreda	May	153	March	472
Larne	June	151	November	295
Limavady	May	131	November	264
Lisburn	December	348	March	485
Londonderry	May	298	March	2,284

Social Security Office	Lowest Month	Lowest Total	Highest Month	Highest Total
Lurgan	May	148	March	785
Magherafelt	May	82	March	375
Newcastle	May	37	March	124
Newry	May	229	November	555
Newtonabbey	May	277	March	513
Newtownards	May	75	January	246
Omagh	May	124	March	333
Portadown	May	111	February	325
Shaftesbury Square	May	267	March	856
Shankill	May	362	March	781
Strabane	May	106	March	550

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available on the proportion of the social fund budget allocated in each social security office by the end of each quarter in the year April 1988-89, indicating the total monetary value involved.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information about the amounts of awards made each month and the outstanding balance of the loans and grants budget for each social security office is available in the Library.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available for the year April 1988-89 on the total numbers of social fund applications and payments and the total value of payments in each social security office for maternity payments, funeral expenses, community care grants, budgeting loans and crisis loans.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Information about the number of community care grants, budgeting and crisis loan applications processed and the amounts awarded for each month since April 1988 is available in the Library.

The information requested about the number and value of maternity payments and funeral expenses is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will provide figures showing the estimated take-up rate for claims for income support payments under the severe hardship provision for 16 and 17-year-olds actively pursuing a place on the youth training programme;

(2) if he will provide figures showing the estimated take-up rate for claims for income support payments under the severe hardship provision.

Mr. Needham *[holding answers 28 April 1989]:* The information requested is not available.

Arms (Terrorists)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information his Department has of countries supplying *(a)* arms, and *(b)* finance for arms to be used by terrorist groups connected with the so-called Loyalist Group in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I am not in a position to comment on the possibility that any country may have supplied arms or finance to such groups.

ENERGY

Departmental Policy

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the policy areas where his Department has failed to reach its targets since May 1979; and if he will identify why these failures occurred and set out how these failures will be rectified:

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the failures in policy implementation in his Department since May 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department has been successful in implementing its main policy objectives since May 1979.

Nuclear Material

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) *Official Report*, 22 December 1988, column *439*, if he will list those bilateral agreements, by date of completion, permitting International Atomic Energy Agency inspection of nuclear material in the United Kingdom; how often these inspections have been conducted; and whether any anomalies have ever been reported.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The earlier agreements with the IAEA referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) are as follows:

Japan/United Kingdom: 15 October 1968—INFCIRC 125
United Kingdom: 14 December 1972—INFCIRC 175

Inspections under these agreements are carried out at regular intervals. After analysis of the inspection data the IAEA has always concluded that the nuclear material present was in accordance with the declarations made by the United Kingdom.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Actively Seeking Work Test

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the change in benefit requirements for the unemployed from being available for work to being actively seeking work will be used by local unemployment offices before its official implementation in October 1989.

Mr. Lee: I have been asked to reply.

No.

Income Support

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what reviews he is carrying out on women who

may make a fresh or new claim for income support and housing benefit in respect of hostel accommodation after October; if he will ensure that they will not be placed on a lower benefit than currently when they claim board and lodging allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 27 April, at column *652*.

Social Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has under review for social fund officers to be redeployed on takeup campaigns; what resources he proposes to allocate to this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department has no plans at present to redeploy social fund officers specifically for the purpose of dealing with take-up campaigns. There are already sufficient staff employed in local offices to deal with variable levels of demand for social fund awards. In the event of a significant unexpected local increase in the numbers of social fund applications, the local office manager would manage resources according to competing priorites.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the number of refusals for social fund applications for both grants and loans, due to (i) applicant not being on income support, (ii) amount requested below £30 minimum, (iii) applicant not considered credit-worthy, (iv) applicant did not satisfy six-month qualification rule, (v) applicant not considered a high priority group, (vi) applicant not requesting a high priority item and (vii) insufficient funds in local office budget both actual and as a percentage of all refusals for the year April 1988 to March 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provisional figures for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989 are set out in the table. The figures relate to the number of occasions on which the particular reason for refusal was used. It is possible for an individual application to be refused for more than one reason.

Refusals of Social Fund loans and grants where selected reasons given, 1988-89

	Loans		*Grants*	
	number of refusals where selected reason given	*as a percentage of all refusals*	*number of refusals where selected reason given*	*as a percentage of all refusals*
Applicant				
not in receipt of IS	35,589	9·5	13,689	9·4
not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	99,817	26·6	n/a	—
Amount > £30 (not travelling expenses)	11,930	3·2	3,298	2·3
Inability to repay	14,513	3·9	n/a	—
Insufficient SF funds, priority too low	83,888	22·3	11,864	8·1
No serious damage or risk to health or safety	22,455	6·0	n/a	—

n/a = not applicable.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the areas in which social fund allocations increased, decreased or remained the same from April 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A list giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will monitor the effects of social fund loans on the living standards of income support claimants during the period when they are repaying them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have recently commissioned the social policy research unit at York university to carry out a programme of detailed research on the social fund. This will include case studies of people who have taken out a social fund loan and will take account of the effect of repayment arrangements.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is done to ensure that deductions made from the income support allowances of claimants repaying social fund loans leave them with enough income to meet their essential needs;

(2) how quickly people who receive social fund loans are expected to repay them, assuming loans of *(a)* £50, *(b)* £100, *(c)* £150 and *(d)* £200.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The period and rate of repayments of a social fund loan do not depend solely on the amount of the loan. In agreeing repayment terms with the applicant before the loan is made, account is taken of the applicant's income, existing commitments and commitments which are likely to arise during the repayment period. Repayments are, however, expected to be completed within 78 weeks, although this can be extended to 104 weeks in certain circumstances. If an applicant finds difficulty in meeting the repayments, or if his circumstances change, he should discuss his problems with the staff of the local office.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many and what percentage of children born in England during 1988 were eligible for maternity payments through the social fund; and what was the average payment made;

(2) how many and what percentage of children born in Scotland during 1988 were eligible for maternity payments through the social fund; and what was the average payment made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not available in the form requested. During 1988, 654,000[1] and 66,000[1] children were born in England and Scotland respectively, with 141,231[1] and 18,324[1] social fund maternity payments being made. These payments were set at a flat rate—£80

before 11 April 1988 and £85 thereafter—and were payable to income support and family credit beneficiaries, subject to a £500 capital disregard, for each child expected, born or adopted.

[1] Provisional figures.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state, for the financial year 1988-89, the proportion of social fund expenditure which has become the subject of civil legal proceedings on the ground of fraud.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 20 April 1989]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

During the year ended 31 March 1989, however, 229 social fund cases were submitted for consideration of civil proceedings in England and Wales, and 13 in Scotland.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there are any trial areas for the change in unemployment benefit policy due to be implemented in October 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no trial areas.

Income Support

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the minimum, net amount of income support payable to a lone-parent with three children under 11 years, after deducations for rent, rates, rent-rate arrears, gas-electricity arrears and social fund loan.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount of income support payable in the circumstances described would depend on a number of factors, including the level of deduction for the social fund loan, which is at the discretion of an officer acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, and on the claimant's income. However, a hypothetical assessment, assuming income of child benefit and one-parent benefit with a social fund deduction of 5 per cent. and with no deduction for current rent, rates or fuel consumption, would be:

	£
Personal allowance	34·90
Children's allowance	35·25
Lone Parent premium	3·90
Family premium	6·50
Applicable amount	80·55
Deductions for arrears of housing costs	1·75
Deduction for arrears of fuel	3·50
Deduction for social fund loan	[1]4·02
Total deductions	9·27
Income support payable	44·33

[1] 5 per cent. of applicable amount.

HEALTH

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds were allocated from his Department for directly commissioned research relevant to mental handicap for each of the past five years; and whether he intends for those funds to be increased over the next five to 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The funds allocated for directly commissioned research relevant to mental handicap for the past five years were as follows:

Year	£
1984-85	679,700
1985-86	709,100
1986-87	520,700
1987-88	771,100
1988-89	659,800

The Department will continue to develop its research strategy in the field of mental handicap over the next five to 10 years.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the figures on the number of *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect maternal deaths in England and Wales in 1982, 1983 and 1984 in National Health Service hospitals without consultant obstetric units, and the number of these associated with anaesthesia, are yet available.

Mr. Freeman: In England and Wales between 1982 and 1984 there were 18 maternal deaths from anaesthesia and one in which anaesthesia contributed to the death. Information on where death occurred is not available in the precise form requested. However, we do have the following details:

Type of maternal death	*Total number*	*[1] Place of death* *Consultant Obstetric Unit*	*Intensive Care Unit*	*[2] Other hospital ward*	*[3] Home*	*[4] Elsewhere*
Direct death	138	38	49	24	23	4
Associated with anaesthesia (all included in direct death)	19	4	14	1	0	0
Indirect death	71	22	16	13	14	6

[1] Not always the place where the anaesthetic complication occurred. (No direct or indirect deaths occurred in GP units or GP maternity homes.)

[2] Includes neurosurgical units, medical and surgical wards, accident and emergency departments.

[3] None of the deaths at home were booked home deliveries.

[4] Includes two deaths in private nursing homes approved under the Abortion Act.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority in England in 1987 *(a)* the total number of beds in non-psychiatric National Health Service hospitals, *(b)* the total number of beds in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds in private institutions expressed as a percentage of the number of non-psychiatric hospital beds.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table. As the distribution of private nursing homes is not controlled by the needs of the resident community to the same extent as NHS provison of services, comparisons of bed stock may be misleading, particularly at district health authority level.

National Health Service non-psychiatric beds for 1987-88, beds in private institutions as at 31 March 1988, by district health authority

District Health Authority	*Average daily available NHS beds (non-psychiatric)*	*Beds in private institutions*	*Beds in private institutions, as a percentage of NHS non-psychiatric beds*
Northern			
Hartlepool	558	164	29
North Tees	688	86	12
South Tees	1,454	282	19
East Cumbria	874	167	19
South Cumbria	740	172	23
West Cumbria	571	31	5
Darlington	622	623	100
Durham	733	139	19
North West Durham	544	8	1
South West Durham	587	55	9
Northumberland	1,092	68	6
Gateshead	768	25	3
Newcastle	2,566	130	5
North Tyneside	666	39	6
South Tyneside	609	n.a.	n.a.
Sunderland	1,606	136	8
Yorkshire			
Hull	1,344	194	14
East Yorkshire	782	387	49
Grimsby	739	167	23
Scunthorpe	692	308	45
Northallerton	372	303	81
York	1,097	640	58
Scarborough	572	493	86
Harrogate	769	1,078	140
Bradford	1,750	464	27
Airedale	723	1,124	155
Calderdale	874	355	41
Huddersfield	836	172	21
Dewsbury	708	38	5
Leeds Western	1,957	383	20
Leeds Eastern	1,788	678	38
Wakefield	811	79	10
Pontefract	673	57	8
Trent			
North Derbyshire	1,051	354	34
Southern Derbyshire	1,767	812	46
Leicestershire	3,008	859	29
North Lincolnshire	1,124	1,257	112
South Lincolnshire	1,048	587	56
Bassetlaw	378	175	46
Central Nottinghamshire	1,162	622	54
Nottingham	2,608	1,503	58
Barnsley	848	84	10
Doncaster	1,151	211	18
Rotherham	899	120	13
Sheffield	3,324	539	16
East Anglian			
Cambridge	1,187	403	34
Peterborough	969	89	9
West Suffolk	947	363	38
East Suffolk	1,420	315	22
Norwich	2,017	684	34
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	779	95	12
West Norfolk and Wisbech	692	190	27
Huntingdon	443	104	23

District Health Authority	Average daily available NHS beds (non-psychiatric)	Beds in private institutions	Beds in private institutions, as a percentage of NHS non-psychiatric beds
North West Thames			
North Bedfordshire	783	265	34
South Bedfordshire	772	22	3
North Hertfordshire	715	289	40
East Hertfordshire	614	184	30
North West Hertfordshire	747	206	28
South West Hertfordshire	666	276	41
Barnet	1,327	403	30
Harrow	734	141	19
Hillingdon	1,167	120	10
Hounslow and Spelthorne	1,097	170	16
Ealing	570	329	58
Brent	704	72	10
Paddington and North Kensington	943	49	5
Riverside	1,573	710	45
North East Thames			
Basildon and Thurrock	1,032	n.a	n.a
Mid Essex	1,076	286	27
North East Essex	1,013	324	32
West Essex	931	199	21
Southend	980	397	41
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	1,820	324	18
Hampstead	789	185	23
Bloomsbury	1,655	1,142	69
Islington	759	30	4
City and Hackney	1,338	108	8
Newham	842	9	1
Tower Hamlets	1,086	135	12
Enfield	789	267	34
Haringey	925	307	33
Redbridge	727	268	37
Waltham Forest	1,065	n.a	n.a
South East Thames			
Brighton	1,314	1,502	114
Eastbourne	842	1,200	142
Hastings	712	1,084	152
South East Kent	1,004	673	67
Canterbury and Thanet	1,175	984	84
Dartford and Gravesham	823	116	14
Maidstone	628	396	63
Medway	921	207	22
Tunbridge Wells	1,027	810	79
Bexley	561	112	20
Greenwich	1,130	40	4
Bromley	867	563	65
West Lambeth	968	36	4
Camberwell	1,144	n.a	n.a
Lewisham and North Southwark	1,425	394	28
South West Thames			
North West Surrey	720	410	57
West Surrey and North East Hants	668	529	79
South West Surrey	777	773	100
Mid Surrey	599	448	75
East Surrey	623	740	119
Chichester	574	847	148
Mid Downs	775	790	102
Worthing	931	1,353	145
Croydon	1,032	735	71
Kingston and Esher	634	290	46
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	646	453	70
Wandsworth	1,207	507	42
Merton and Sutton	1,099	587	53
Wessex			
East Dorset	1,897	2,221	117
West Dorset	750	327	44
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	1,608	849	53
Southampton and South West Hampshire	1,714	624	36
Winchester	698	392	56
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	697	253	36
Salisbury	675	306	45
Swindon	809	287	35

District Health Authority	Average daily available NHS beds (non-psychiatric)	Beds in private institutions	Beds in private institutions, as a percentage of NHS non-psychiatric beds
Bath	1,733	759	44
Isle of Wight	474	174	37
Oxford			
East Berkshire	1,032	800	78
West Berkshire	1,316	344	26
Aylesbury Vale	727	278	38
Wycombe	702	372	53
Milton Keynes	406	187	46
Kettering	786	39	5
Northampton	1,046	969	93
Oxfordshire	2,063	792	38
South Western			
Bristol and Weston	1,464	1,630	111
Frenchay	951	261	27
Southhead	772	676	88
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	1,360	1,103	81
Exeter	1,527	815	53
North Devon	577	419	73
Plymouth	1,709	1,131	66
Torbay	999	837	84
Cheltenham	861	456	53
Gloucester	1,221	582	48
Somerset	1,719	842	49
West Midlands			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	546	206	38
Herefordshire	674	225	33
Kidderminster and District	387	139	36
Worcester and District	803	955	119
Shropshire	1,733	285	16
Mid Staffordshire	744	696	94
North Staffordshire	2,016	258	13
South East Staffordshire	959	273	28
Rugby	213	163	76
North Warwickshire	503	120	24
South Warwickshire	923	712	77
Central Birmingham	1,421	420	30
East Birmingham	862	135	16
North Birmingham	574	290	51
South Birmingham	1,340	222	17
West Birmingham	1,343	98	7
Coventry	1,349	75	6
Dudley	1,219	102	8
Sandwell	854	107	13
Solihull	462	82	18
Walsall	799	65	8
Wolverhampton	1,221	243	20
Mersey			
Chester	792	337	43
Crewe	820	170	21
Halton	274	98	36
Macclesfield	568	622	110
Warrington	729	107	15
Liverpool	2,605	871	33
St. Helens and Knowsley	998	232	23
Southport and Formby	576	1,185	206
South Sefton	1,466	309	21
Wirral	1,541	1,565	102
North Western			
Lancaster	664	230	35
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	1,284	880	69
Preston	1,198	224	19
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	1,132	384	34
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	967	379	39
West Lancashire	631	90	14
Chorley and South Ribble	244	326	134
Bolton	1,024	228	22
Bury	671	422	63
North Manchester	1,297	104	8
Central Manchester	1,153	72	6
South Manchester	1,869	281	15

District Health Authority	Average daily available NHS beds (non-psychiatric)	Beds in private institutions	Beds in private institutions, as a percentage of NHS non-psychiatric beds
Oldham	786	92	12
Rochdale	645	242	38
Salford	1,306	284	22
Stockport	1,309	1,028	79
Tameside and Glossop	820	112	14
Trafford	582	422	73
Wigan	1,179	72	6

Orthopaedic Treatment, North Staffordshire

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the time out-patients in north Staffordshire have to wait for a first available orthopaedic appointment.

Mr. Mellor: Waiting lists and waiting times for orthopaedic treatment in north Staffordshire are being investigated by an independent management team. If the team identifies the need for an injection of funds, the regional health authority will be able to apply for an allocation from the £6 million reserved from the waiting list fund for districts with particular waiting problems.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the average waiting list times in days for National Health Service operations *(a)* nationally, *(b)* by regional authorities and *(c)* for Halton district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The available information in respect of in-patients treated in surgical departments in National Health Service hospitals during the financial year 1987-88 is given in the following table:

Median interval, in weeks, between the time an in-patient[1] was placed on the waiting list and admission to hospital

Location of hospital	Weeks
England	6·6
Northern Regional Health Authority	8·4
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	6·3
Trent Regional Health Authority	5·1
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	6·4
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	4·4
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	5·9
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	7·7
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	9·7
Wessex Regional Health Authority	7·3
Oxford Regional Health Authority	7·4
South Western Regional Health Authority	7·0
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	6·0
Mersey Regional Health Authority	6·5
North Western Regional Health Authority	6·5
Halton District Health Authority	3·1

[1] Ordinary admissions and day cases, booked and waiting list cases.

Halton District General Hospital

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the length of the out-patient list for Halton district general hospital; and what is the length for each specialty within it.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect information on out-patient waiting times centrally.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths occur annually from cervical cancer; and what estimates he has made of the reduction in that number if there were a 100 per cent. response to a call and recall system.

Mr. Freeman: There have been for several years around 2,000 deaths annually in England and Wales from malignant neoplasm of the cervix uteri and there were 1,903 deaths in 1987. Cervical smears taken every five years between the ages of 20 and 64 could reduce by more than 80 per cent. the number of deaths which would otherwise occur from cancer of the cervix.

Electoral Register

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the percentage change in the numbers on local government electoral registers between 1988 and 1989 in *(a)* Kensington and Chelsea, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Liverpool, *(d)* Bristol and *(e)* Rochester upon Medway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table:

Percentage change between 1988 and 1989 local government electorates

County district/London borough	Percentage
Kensington and Chelsea	−4·3
Manchester	−4·2
Liverpool	−9·6
Bristol	−2·6
Rochester upon Medway	−11·3

Possible reasons for changes in electorates were indicated in OPCS "Monitor EL 89/1", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Encephalopathies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the research being sponsored by his Department into transmissible encephalopathies.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health is not sponsoring any research in transmissible encephalopathies.

However, a committee has been set up by this Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell to advise the Departments on research in progress or required on bovine spongiform encephalopathy and other transmissible encephalopathies.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects Lord Justice Taylor to present his interim report on the Hillsborough disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is for Lord Justice Taylor to decide in the light of his inquiries whether there are matters which should be the subject of an interim report and if so the timing of it.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Football Supporters Association since the Hillsborough tragedy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: None. It is of course open to the association to put forward evidence to Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry, or views to the Department of the Environment or the Home Office on matters within our responsibilities.

Rapists

Mr Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research is being carried out, or is planned, into the circumstances and treatment of mentally disordered rapists in prison and into ways of seeking to prevent them from reoffending.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no research being carried out, or planned, which is solely concerned with mentally disordered rapists. However, a certain amount of research is being carried out (separately) on mentally disordered offenders and sexual offenders which may, inter alia, provide some information about mentally disordered rapists and possible ways of preventing them reoffending.

With regard to research on mentally disordered offenders, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to a question by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 20 March 1989 at columns 405-06

As to research on sex offenders, the Institute of Psychiatry is carrying out a study of sex offenders in prisons. The purpose of this study (the results of which should be available later this year) is to try to identify factors in sex offenders' histories which appear to distinguish them from other types of offender and non-offender populations. It will be particularly concerned with rapists. The study may help in making decisions about which types of sexual offender are likely to benefit from treatment and which are not.

Mr Malcolm Cowburn of the Nottingham probation service is carrying out an investigation and evaluation of the work being undertaken with sex offenders (including rapists) in prisons in England and Wales. The results of this study should also be available this year.

Consideration is being given by the Department to carrying out a study of convicted rapists. The purpose of the study would be to describe the offenders and their offences in detail and to assess their treatment needs. A history of mental disorder would be noted as part of that description.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men are currently serving a sentence of imprisonment for rape; and what proportion of such prisoners are mentally disordered.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 June 1988 about 1,070 males were serving sentences for rape offences, including attempted rape, in prison service establishments in England and Wales. Information on the number who are mentally disordered is not recorded centrally.

Football Grounds, (Safety)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* arrests and *(b)* ejections from the ground were made by the police before, during and after the games between (i) West Ham United and Millwall and (ii) Chelsea and Leeds United, played on Saturday 22 April.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has provided the following information. Of the 94 people arrested in connection with the match between Chelsea and Leeds United, 59 were arrested before., 12 during and 23 after the game. Twenty eight people were ejected from the ground. Of the 24 people arrested in connection with the match between West Ham United and Millwall 15 were arrested before, seven during and two after the game. Twenty four people were ejected from the ground. Police figures do not distinguish between ejections made before and during a game.

Drug Traffickers

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the oral answer to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale of 13 April, *Official Report*, column 1053, what account is taken of the sums confiscated from convicted drug traffickers in setting the allocations for *(a)* rehabilitation of drug offenders, and *(b)* the prevention of drug trafficking.

Mr. John Patten: We allocate funds to work against drug misuse according to needs and priorities. No direct account is taken of the varying and unpredictable sums confiscated from convicted drug traffickers in different parts of the country.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will place the invitation to tender documents for the new police national computer in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Publication of these documents would be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will describe the new facilities, applications or indexes that are envisaged for the new police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The new police national computer will initially provide the police with the same facilities as are provided on the current system. No decisions have yet been taken about the provision of additonal facilities on the new computer.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the indexes and the data items contained within each index of the new police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All names applications on the new police national computer may contain information in the following data classes:

Name
Aliases
Driver Number
Place of Birth
Date of Birth
Sex
Colour (White, Non-White, or Unknown)
Ethnic Appearance
Height
Information Markers
Address
Home Force
Marks and Scars
Warning Signals
Cross References
Police Gazette Reference
Date and Time of Last Update

Each of the specific names applications may contain information in the following additional data classes:

Criminal Name index:
Criminal Record Office Number
Fingerprint Indicator
Criminal Record Weed Years
Place first to notice
Date first to notice
Regional Cross References

Fingerprint index:
Henry Code
Pattern Codes
Ridge Counts
Offence types
Places to notice

Wanted/Missing index
Wanted/Missing number
Force/Station code
Class (the reason for the report having been entered)
Reference to case papers
Location of case papers
Report date
Incident date
Expiry date
Offence/Class qualification
Date of Warrant
Fine amount
Court Name
Offence location
Power of arrest
Warrant backed for bail
Text
Date entered on PNC

Disqualified Driver index
Disqualified Driver Reference Number
Disqualified Driver Information Number
Force/Station code
Court Name
Court Date
Police Expiry Date
DVLC Expiry Date
Test Required marker
Report Confirmed marker

Prosecutions index (formerly known as the convictions index): Report type (either Impending Prosecution or Conviction)

If impending prosecution:
Fingerprint Indicator
Photographic Indicator
Force/Station code
Crime Reference
Date charged
Bail/Custody indicator
Weed Date

If conviction:
Fingerprint Indicator
Photograph Indicators
Force/Station code
Crime reference
Court
Disposed Date
Offence
Taken Into Consideration (Offence)
Disposal
Taken Into Consideration (Composite)

The vehicles application on the new police national computer may contain information in the following data classes:

Vehicle Identification number
Chassis number
Current Vehicle Registration Mark
Previous Vehicle Registration Mark
Foreign Vehicle Marker
Stolen Vehicle Marker
Vehicle Make
Vehicle Model
Vehicle Type
Vehicle Colour
Engine Number
Vehicle Registration Office code
Year and month of registration
Date of last keeper change
Owner name
Owner Address
Owner postcode
Markers
Date of Last Description update
Time of Last Description update
Force station code of description owner
Force station code of description creator
Force station code of last description update
Date of recovery
Force station code of recovery

Police information may be added to these vehicle records in the form of one or more of the following report types:

Lost or stolen
Found
Information
Seen/checked
Restricted
Removed
Correction

These reports may contain information in the following data classes:

Vehicle report type
Vehicle report number
Vehicle report text
Reference number
Earliest date of incident
Latest date of incident
Date of report creation
Time of report creation
Force station code of report owner
Force station code of report creator
Force station code of last update
Date of last update
Time of last update
Report confirmed marker

The stolen property index (formerly known as the chassis/engine index) may contain information in the following data classes about plant, trailers, caravans, engines, marine engines and motorcycle sidecars:

Item number
Fleet number
Report type
Report text
Loser details
Earliest date of theft
Latest date of theft
Item type
Item make
Plant type
Item model
Item colour

Engine capacity
Reference number
Force station code of report owner
Force station code of report creator
Force station code of last update
Date of last update
Time of last update
Report confirmed marker

The broadcast application enables forces to send messages to printer terminals in specified destination forces. The messages are stored for 24 hours after creation.

The message log application automatically records the full details of all on-line transactions. The information is retained on the log for six months.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will describe the improvements in communications between police forces computers and the new police national computer; whether all police force computers will be linked into the new network; whether police forces will be able to transmit databases to each other and search other police computer systems; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The new police national computer will be linked to all forces through the existing network, modified as necessary to ensure compatibility with the new equipment.

We are discussing with the police service its requirements for a wider police network which would permit the exchange of information between forces, but no decisions have yet been taken about the scope of this network.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the data protection registrar has been asked to comment on the facilities that will be provided by the new police national computer and network.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The data protection registrar has been consulted about the facilities which will be provided by the new police national computer.

Criminal Injury and Damage Claims

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current situation concerning the widow of a common law husband with reference to entitlement to claims for a criminal injury and damage.

Mr. John Patten: Under the Fatal Accidents Act 1976 courts in England and Wales may award damages for financial dependency and funeral expenses to a common law widow who had lived with the man continuously for at least the last two years before his death. Awards under the criminal injuries compensation scheme are confined in such cases to funeral expenses. There is no general entitlement to compensation for damage, although the courts have power to order an offender upon conviction to pay compensation for damage he has caused.

Obscene Publications Act 1959

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions there have been under section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959; and of those found guilty, what sentence was imposed in England and Wales since 1979;

(2) how many orders have been made at magistrates courts in England and Wales to forfeit obscene articles under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in each year since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Information held centrally for 1982 to 1987 is given in the table. Information prior to 1982 would involve disproportionate cost.

Persons proceeded against for offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959

England and Wales

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Number proceeded against	539	757	890	540	231	154
Total found guilty	234	370	429	225	129	93
Absolute or conditional discharge	9	7	13	12	3	4
Probation order	—	1	—	3	1	1
Fine	128	248	291	130	80	63
Community service order	1	3	3	4	1	3
Fully suspended sentence	38	60	77	50	20	10
Immediate custody	58	49	42	25	15	12
Otherwise dealt with	—	2	3	1	9	—
Number subject to forfeiture order	1	5	6	9	14	15

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many items of obscene material were seized by police under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in England and Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Renton: Information about seizures of items under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 is not held centrally. The only information which can be obtained without disproportionate cost relates to the Metropolitan police, and is set out in the following table:

Items seized by the Metropolitan Police under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, 1979 to 1988.

	Number of items
1979	1,170,752
1980	849,879
1981	554,862
1982	1,081,404
1983	2,071,190
1984	288,259
1985	286,511
1986	560,047
1987	813,243
1988	655,119

Electoral Register

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve electoral registration in Kensington and Chelsea, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and Rochester upon Medway.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The registration of persons entitled to vote is the statutory duty of the electoral registration officers for the districts or London boroughs concerned. I am confident that their aim is to produce as comprehensive and accurate a register as possible, and we intend to support them as in previous years with an appropriate publicity campaign at the time of the autumn canvass.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he holds information for any other countries on the use made by taxation authorities of electoral registers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he holds information for any other countries on the use made by local authorities of electoral registers for their own financial purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to examine the impact of the community charge on electoral registration.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 17 April at column *33*.

Community Charge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish *(a)* the full details of the police arbitration tribunal award of March as it relates to the introduction of the community charge and police officers' allowances and *(b)* the likely costs of this section of the award in 1990-91.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The terms of the arbitration award were as follows:

(a) No provision should be made by the police authorities to undertake payment of the community charge levied on police officers or their wives;

(b) the present system of rent and rates allowances and compensatory grants should be remodelled as explained in our general considerations set out above; and

(c) the process should take effect from April 1989 in Scotland and from April 1990 in England and Wales and also in Northern Ireland, as far as is practicable, bearing in mind that the community charge is not likely to be introduced there on that date.

In its general considerations the tribunal concluded that the new police housing allowance, which is to replace the present rent allowance, should be determined for each force by

"taking the current bill, which has been expressed as for rent and rates, and dividing it by the number of officers concerned".

It will not be possible to calculate the costs of the award until the negotiations on a number of issues which the tribunal passed back to the police negotiating board for further consideration have been concluded.

Parliamentary Boundary Commissions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the new membership of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England and Wales.

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Speaker is chairman of both boundary commissions. The other members are as follows:

	Appointed by
Boundary Commission for England	
The Hon. Mr. Justice Knox	The Lord Chancellor
Miss Sheila Cameron, QC	The Home Secretary
Mr. D. Macklin, MA	The Secretary of State for the Environment
Boundary Commission for Wales	
The Hon. Mr. Justice Anthony Evans	The Lord Chancellor
Mr. W. P. Davey, CBE, DL, IPFA	The Home Secretary
Mr. M. P. McLaggan, JP, DL, MA	The Secretary of State for Wales

The appointment of Mr. Justice Knox will expire on 31 December 1990; the other appointments expire on 31 December 1992.

EMPLOYMENT

National Dock Labour Board

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of financing the National Dock Labour Board sports activities in 1987-88; and how much of this was financed through the employers' levy.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of £59,292 in 1987, all financed through the board's management levy on employers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the levy income for the National Dock Labour Board for 1987.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* The board's own management levy was £4,433,636. Levy received on behalf of the national voluntary severance scheme, administered by the board, was £2,047,046.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the legal and professional fees incurred by the National Dock Labour Board in 1987.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Legal fees were £94,767 and professional fees were £13,030.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost to the National Dock Labour Board of financing the registered dock workers' national golf competition in 1987.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* A total of £11,019.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent by the National Dock Labour Board in 1987 in legal fees on definitions of dock work.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* A total of £43,050.

Jobstart

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have used the jobstart allowance in each year since it began and for each standard economic region.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of people accepted on to the jobstart programme in each employment service region is shown in the table:

Region	*From 1 July 1986 to 26 March 1987*	*From 27 March 1987 to 25 March 1988*	*From 26 March 1988 to 27 January 1989*
Northern	694	1,003	765
Yorkshire and Humberside	992	1,557	1,121
East Midlands and Eastern	921	1,288	819
London	286	292	219
South East	572	708	371
South West	430	639	308
Wales	627	1,131	768
West Midlands	1,190	1,696	1,104
North West	1,890	2,884	1,794
Scotland	954	1,493	1,139
Great Britain	8,556	12,691	8,408

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the average length of stay of workers claiming the jobstart allowance.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not readily available. However, it is estimated that in 1988 two-thirds of jobstart participants completed the 26 weeks of the programme. People who do not complete 26 weeks may cease to be eligible for the allowance for a number of reasons, including the wage rising above the limit allowed.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the sectors in which jobstart allowance workers were based in 1988.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give details of the average jobstart allowance workers for each year since the start of the initiative; and if this includes the allowance.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not readily available. However, an evaluation survey of the jobstart programme is currently being undertaken. Preliminary information from the study indicates that the average starting wage of jobstart workers in April and May 1988 was £67. This figure excludes the allowance.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claims of unemployment benefit have been disallowed on the grounds of refusal or premature termination of training in each month since September 1988.

Mr. Lee: Information is not collected in the form requested. However, in the six month period ending 31 December 1988, the total number of claims for unemployment benefit disallowed by adjudication officers on the grounds of refusal or premature termination of training, was 1,110.

Work Permits

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to review the work permit scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Changes in the labour market since the current rules for granting work permits were set in 1980 make it timely to review the operation of the scheme. We are concerned to see that the scheme, taking into account the interests of the resident labour force, provides as efficient service as possible to employers who need to employ people from outside the European Community. My Department has today sent a consultation paper to interested bodies inviting their view on proposals for increasing the effectiveness of the scheme. I have placed a copy of the paper in the Library. This review will also contribute to the Government's strategy of removing burdens from business.

Industrial Action

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the number of days lost in the United Kingdom and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries by industrial action in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* The available information on working days lost from industrial stoppages, expressed as a ratio per thousand employees is shown in the table. The information covers OECD countries for 1987, the latest year for which comparative data is available. Comparisons between countries should be made with considerable care because of the different coverage of each country's statistics. Countries use different criteria for the exclusion of small stoppages from the statistics; public sector strikes are excluded in some cases, and some countries exclude workers prevented from working because others at their workplace are on strike. Further details are given in the article "International

comparisons of industrial stoppages for 1986" published in the *Employment Gazette*, June 1988, page 335, a copy of which is in the Library.

Industrial stoppages working days lost per thousand employees[1] in all industries and services 1987

	Days
United Kingdom	160
Australia	220
Austria	[2]—
Canada	370
Denmark	60
Finland	60
France[3]	30
Germany (Federal Republic)	[2]—
Greece	970
Ireland	320
Italy	320
Japan	10
Netherlands	10
New Zealand[3]	270
Norway	10
Portugal	40
Spain	630
Sweden	—
Switzerland	—
United States[3]	40

[1] Employees in employment: some figures have been estimated.
[2] Less than five days lost per thousand employees.
[3] Significant coverage differences, the most important of which are: France and New Zealand exclude public sector strikes; New Zealand figures are for strikes of more than 10 working days duration; United States figures exclude disputes where less than 1,000 workers involved.

Sources:

Working days lost: International Labour Office (ILO) Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1988. Employees in employment: ILO and OECD publications.

Information is not available for Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg and Turkey.

DEFENCE

United Nations

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what support his Department gives to the United Nations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department provides the following support to the United Nations:

UNFICYP[1]
One infantry battalion, one support regiment and a company of military police.

UNTAG[2]
One signals squadron and a small RAF reception assistance team.

Republic of Korea
One platoon from the Hong Kong garrison, which contributes towards the United Nations Honour Guard, and a small number of United Kingdom personnel in the headquarters of the Commonwealth Liaison Mission to the United Nations Command.

British Forces Cyprus also provide logistic support for UNDOF[3] and UNIFIL[4] and there is currently an Army officer attached to the United Nations Field Operations Division in New York advising on logistics matters.

[1] United Nations Force in Cyprus.
[2] United Nations Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia.
[3] United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, Syria/Israel.
[4] United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

Condor 2 Missile

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the role played by the APV company of London, in the sale of missile propellant compounds to the Italian firm SNIA BPD via APV subsidiary APV Chemical Machinery Inc., of Saginaw, Michigan, United States of America, for use by the Argentine Institute of Aeronautic and Space Research in the development of the Condor 2 intermediate tactical missile.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

There was no export to Argentina of this type from the United Kingdom. Exports by APV's American subsidiary are a matter for the American authorities.

Defence Costs and Commitments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the latest United States plans for burden sharing will affect United Kingdom defence costs and commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are not aware of any United States Governmant burden sharing plans that are likely to affect the United Kingdom's defence costs and commitments.

Trident

Mr. Andrew F. Barnett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about command and control of Trident.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Lance Missiles

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, during the recent NATO nuclear planning Group meeting, the United Kingdom delegation raised the case for consideration of obligations under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty for NATO states party to the non-proliferation treaty, when evaluating the replacement of Lance nuclear-tipped short-range missiles in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what scientific data were presented to the London dumping convention *(a)* in the years up to and including 1983 and *(b)* post 1983 on the potential environmental damage that might arise from the disposal at sea of (i) decommissioned nuclear submarine hulls, (ii) submarine reactor cores and (iii) low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes from the processing of military nuclear materials.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom has presented no such data.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, following the sinking of the Soviet Mike class nuclear submarine on 7 April, he will review the present safety of *(a)* United Kingdom nuclear-powered submarines and *(b)* United States nuclear-powered submarines afforded docking rights in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Measures to ensure the continuing safe design and operation of Royal Navy submarines are kept under constant review. In the light of what is currently known of the circumstances of the loss of the Mike class Soviet submarine on 7 April, the accident would appear to offer no specific lessons with regard to Royal Naval submarine safety. The safety of United States nuclear-powered warships is the responsibility of the United States Government. However, visits to this country by United States nuclear-powered submarines are covered by a written arrangement between the two countries.

Diversion Airfields

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the master diversion airfields used by the Royal Air Force and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation based aircraft in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Neubert: The Royal Air Force presently operates eight military emergency diversion aerodromes in the United Kingdom and one master diversion aerodrome overseas.

These are:

MEDAs

RAF Leeming
RAF Leuchars
RAF Lossiemouth
RAF Manston
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Valley
RAF Waddington
RAF Wattisham

MDA

RAF Wildenrath

Ascension and Falkland Islands

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total tonnage of fresh vegetables supplied to the Ascension and Falklands Islands from *(a)* England and *(b)* the Isle of Wight to date.

Mr. Neubert: Last year 375 tonnes of fresh vegetables were shipped to Ascension and the Falkland Islands from the United Kingdom. Our records do not enable the origin of the vegetables to be identified in the detail requested.

Charities (Retail Prices Index Error)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what payments were made to armed services charities from moneys arising from the error in the retail price index.

Mr. Neubert: Payments were made from Ministry of Defence funds, consequent upon the error in calculation of the retail prices index discovered in 1987, to the following charitable organisations for further distribution:

	£
King George's Fund for Sailors	282,000
Army Benevolent Fund	498,000
Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund	418,000

Territorial Army

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence approximately how many United Kingdom employers now release staff for service in the Territorial Army.

Mr. Neubert: It is not at present possible to provide an accurate assessment of the number of employers who release staff for TA service. In addition to the willingness of men and women to offer their services, the need to harness the wholehearted support of employers has long been acknowledged. For this reason we launched a major campaign in September of last year not only with a prime aim of stressing the importance of the TA, but also of making employers aware of the benefits which may accrue from employees' participation, ie improved qualities of leadership, discipline, self-reliance, communications and the acquisition of personal skills. One of the major initiatives in the early stages of this campaign was the circulation of a letter from the chairman of the National Employer Liaison Committee, Mr. Tony MacPherson, to over 600 leading companies seeking an active commitment to the Reserve Forces. The response to this letter has been overwhelmingly positive.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Pollution

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will include in the *Official Report* his estimate of the proportionate contribution to the pollution of the water supply in toxic or other terms as defined by the European Economic Community regulations or otherwise made by *(a)* manufacturing industry, *(b)* agriculture, *(c)* sewage works and *(d)* domestic consumers of water.

Mr. Howard: Pollution incidents from manufacturing industry, agriculture and sewage treatments works rarely affect water supplies, because water undertakers take effective precautionary measures to prevent this. A few supplies are affected by nitrate pollution from agriculture and very low levels of pesticides have been detected in some supplies as a result of activity by a variety of bodies including local authorities, farmers and nationalised industries. Water in individual properties may have a high lead concentration because of lead communication and supply pipes. There have been occasional instances of pollution from chlorinated solvents derived from de-greasing activities or dry cleaning businesses. Further information about the quality of groundwater sources is contained in the report "Assessment of Groundwater in England and Wales" prepared for the Department by Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd. and published last December.

Environmental Assessment

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those proposed developments for which, since 15 July 1988, the local planning authority has given an opinion that environmental assessment is required.

Mr. Howard: The following cases in which an English local planning authority has given an opinion under regulation 5(4) of the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 that environment assessment is required have been notified to the Department in accordance with paragraph 52 of DoE circular 15/88.

Local planning authority	Proposed Development	Date of opinion
Leeds City Council	Retail, etc, development Kirkstall Valley, Leeds	11 August 1988
Calderdale D. C.	Sludge de-watering plant Bradley	7 March 1989
Newcastle City Council	Gosforth Park housing development, Newcastle	13 March 1989
Peterborough City Council	Residential and commercial development at Castor and Ailsworth, Peterborough	31 March 1989
Knowsley D. C.	Incinerator for medical and hospital wastes, Hammond Road., Kirkby, Merseyside	13 April 1989

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those developments for which an environmental statement has been provided under the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 and give the planning authority's decision in respect of each planning application with any conditions attached to the permissions.

Mr. Howard: Copies of the environmental statements have been sent to the Department under regulation 14(2)(B) in respect of the following developments:

	Proposed development	Planning decision as notified to the Secretary of State under regulation 23
Slough Borough Council	Expansion of private power station, Slough, Berkshire.	Planning permission granted 10 January 1989.
South Oxfordshire District Council	Brickworks, Southmead Industrial Estate, Didcot, Oxfordshire.	Planning permission refused 11 January 1989.
Peterborough City Council	Private Electricity Generating Station, Peterborough.	Outline planning permission granted 31 January 1989.
North Tyneside District Council	Synthetic resin plant, North Shields.	Not yet notified.
Cleveland County Council	Toxic waste incinerator, Seal Sands, Cleveland.	Not yet notified.
Gateshead District Council	Infill of former Wardley Quarry, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear.	Not yet notified.
Teesside District Council	Clinical waste incinerator, Tyne Tees Wharf, Middlesbrough.	Not yet notified.
Durham County Council	Hilton Lane opencast coal site, Hilton, Durham.	Not yet notified.
Wyre District Council	Pumping station and sewage outfall, Fleetwood, Lancashire.	Not yet notified.
Wirral District Council	Waste disposal site, Bromborough, the Wirral, Merseyside	Not yet notified
Leeds City Council	Quarry extension, Castleford, West Yorkshire.	Not yet notified.
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	Waste treatment centre, Kirk Sandall, Doncaster.	Not yet notified.
Harrogate District Council and North Yorkshire County Council	Harrogate/Knaresborough Southern Bypass.	Not yet notified.
Black Country Development Corporation	Black Country Spine Road, Wolverhampton.	Not yet notified.
Corby District Council	Private Electricity Generating Station, Corby, Northamptonshire.	Not yet notified.
Melton Borough Council	New village (Kettleby Magna), Great Dalby, Leicestershire.	Not yet notified.
Northampton District Council	New village, Wooton Fields, Northampton	Not yet notified.
Derbyshire Dales District Council	Holiday village, Flash Dam, Matlock, Derbyshire	Not yet notified
Mansfield District Council	Robin Hood Theme Park, Mansfield Woodhouse.	Not yet notified

	Proposed development	*Planning decision as notified to the Secretary of State under regulation 23*
Boston Borough Council	Steel rolling mill, Batteries Farm, Boston Lincolnshire.	Not yet notified
Broxtowe Borough Council	Retail Park, Giltbrook, Nottingham	Not yet notified
Derbyshire Dales District Council	Hotel, conference centre, funicular railway, etc, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire.	Application withdrawn prior to planning decision being made.
Castle Point District Council	New settlement at Canvey Island, Essex.	Not yet notified.
Rochester-upon-Medway City	Trading Port, BP site, Isle of Grain, Kent.	Not yet notified.
Rochester-upon-Medway City	Liquefied Natural Gas terminal, BP site, Isle of Grain, Kent	Not yet notified
Tonbridge and Malling District Council	Distribution depot/light industrial development, Ditton Park Quarry, Aylesford, Kent.	Not yet notified
Medina Borough Council	Marina, hotel and residential units, Port Marina, East Cowes, Isle of Wight.	Not yet notified.
Berkshire County Council	Sandhurst/Crowthorne Bypass.	Not yet notified
Surrey County Council	Waste disposal site, Hersham and Trumps Farms, Longcross, Surrey.	Not yet notified.
South Oxfordshire District Council	Wallingford by-pass.	Not yet notified
Devon County Council	Extension of landfill site, Kengsteignton, South Devon	Not yet notified.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those proposed developments since 15 July 1988 where *(a)* he has exercised his power to make a direction without an application under the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, *(b)* he has had to make a direction where a planning application has not been accompanied by an environmental assessment but the planning authority have notified the applicant that an environmental statement would be required; and if he will state the effect of those directions.

Mr. Howard: The following directions have been given by the Secretary of State:

LPA	*Proposed Development*	*Date of Direction*	*Effect of Direction*
	(a) Without application under the regulations:		
Lincoln City Council	Business Park, Bishops Bridge, Lincoln	13 April 1989	EA required
	(b) in response to a request by a developer following a notification by a local planning authority that an environmental statement is required in respect of a planning application not accompanied by an environmental statement:		
1. City of Nottingham	Retail park, hotel, etc. Babbington Colliery site, Nottingham	2 September 1988	EA not required
2. London Boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest	Lee Cross Shopping Centre	28 October 1988	EA required
3. Wycombe D.C.	Motorway Service Area, M40, near High Wycombe	17 November 1988	EA not required
4. South Buckingham D.C.	Shopping Complex, Tanhouse Pits, Iver, Bucks.	6 December 1988	EA not required
5. Northants C.C.	Extension of sand and gravel workings, Stanwick Quarry, near Raunds, Northants	6 December 1988	EA required
6. Cambridgeshire C.C.	Extension of sand and gravel workings, Barleycroft Farm, Cambs	14 December 1988	EA not required
7. Thamesdown B.C.	Industrial estate, Stratton St. Margaret, Swindon	21 December 1988	EA not required
8. Essex C.C.	Sand and gravel workings Mana Farm, Essex	30 January 1989	EA required
9. North West Leicestershire D.C.	Retail Park, Donington Park Motor Racing Circuit	2 March 1989	EA required
10. North West Leicestershire D.C.	Business/Office Park, Donington Park	2 March 1989	EA required
11. London Borough of Lambeth	Redevelopment of County Hall, London SE1	14 March 1989	EA not required
12. Malvern Hills D.C.	New village and industrial development, adjacent to Malvern Hills	17 March 1989	EA required
13. North Devon D.C.	Proposed Motor racing circuit at Bishop's Nympton, Devon	27 April 1989	EA required
	(c) in response to a request by a local planning authority in respect of its own development:		
1. Sedgfield D.C.	Heighington Lane Industrial Site, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham	13 October 1988	EA not required

LPA	Proposed Development	Date of Direction	Effect of Direction
2. North Warwickshire D.C.	Infrastructure for industrial estate, Kingsbury Colliery site, near Tamworth	17 October 1988	EA not required
3. Langbaurgh B.C.	Ski lift and ski centre, Eston Hills Normanby	9 December 1988	EA not required

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those developments where he has been required to make a pre-application direction as to whether the development should be subject to environmental assessment and give the decision in each case.

Mr. Howard: There have been no such cases.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in view of the Housing Corporation's work with tenants' transfer and co-operatives, if he has taken any steps to ensure that the housing co-operative sector is represented on the board of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend makes appointments to the board of the Housing Corporation so as to ensure that it has at its disposal the range of skills and experience necessary to fulfil its statutory functions.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his guidance to local authorities in relation to their policies and practices for the housing of those with HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions have not yet been taken on any Government guidance. Advice is already available to local authorities in the Report "Housing and HIV Infection" published by the local authority associations' officers working group on AIDS.

Dioxin Levels (Devon)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to secure regular monitoring of dioxin levels from the incineration at Yelland in north Devon of sewage sludge and screenings; and if he will ensure that the results are made available to the local authorities concerned.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Dioxin emission monitoring is extremely complex and expensive and results cannot be available for some time after the sampling period. We therefore believe that the appropriate way to control dioxin formation is to ensure strict control of combustion conditions and good abatement of particulates. This is in line with the recently agreed EC directive on new municipal waste incineration plant. Local authorities are responsible for the environmental regulation of incinerators of less than one tonne per hour capacity, such as the one at Yelland.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much he plans to spend distributing leaflets to households on forthcoming changes to the system of local government finance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much he plans to spend on press advertising in May 1989 on the new system of local government finance.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which I gave him on 17 April.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to publicise the national non-domestic rate and the revaluation of non-domestic properties.

Mr. Ridley: I hope to announce shortly how I propose to inform the public of the effects of the statute creating the new business rate.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the provisions of part II of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 to the City of London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans at present for designating areas of archaeological importance within the City of London. English Heritage has been reviewing the effectiveness of part II of the 1979 Act and has recently submitted advice, which we are considering.

Roman Remains (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis scheduled monument consent was granted to Hammerson Property Group for the Roman remains in Upper Thames street.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A trial excavation of the site was undertaken by the Museum of London in 1988 and the results were evaluated by English Heritage. On the basis of that excavation an evaluation scheduled monument consent was granted to the developers on 22 December 1988 on condition that the Museum of London be allowed up to six months to carry out an archaeological excavation beneath part of Dominant House.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates have been made of how much of the total Roman site under Dominant House and Fur Trade House will be destroyed if the proposed development in Upper Thames street by Hammerson Property Group proceeds.

Mrs Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 18 April 1989, column 77. It is estimated that the current area of excavation covers about 20-25 per cent. of the known area of the monument.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the extent of the damage to the Roman remains on the Hammerson site in Upper Thames street caused by the 1964-65 building construction; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Less than 10 per cent. of the area of the current excavation was removed or disturbed by the construction of Dominant House in 1964.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and the City of London regarding safeguarding the Roman remains on the Hammerson Propery Group site in Upper Thames street; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There has been no direct contact between the Department and the City of London on this matter. We have been represented throughout by our statutory advisors on archaeology, English Heritage.

Scheduled Monument Consent

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions since 1979 he has withdrawn or suspended scheduled monument consent; and under what powers did he act in each case.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Edible Doormouse

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the European distribution of the edible doormouse, or glis glis.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the edible doormouse, glis glis, has a wide-ranging distribution in central and southern Europe, including northern Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Greece. The species was introduced into the United Kingdom in 1902 and is now found in the counties of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

Naburn Hospital Site

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what matters he took into account in agreeing to allow Selby district council to determine the further application by Paul Sykes (Developments) Ltd. to redevelop the former Naburn hospital site into an out-of-town shopping centre, contrary to the Greater York shopping policy;

(2) what matters he took into account in reaching his original decision to allow Selby district council to determine the application by Paul Sykes (Developments) Ltd. to redevelop the former Naburn hospital site into an out-of-town shopping centre, contrary to the Greater York shopping policy.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* In considering whether to call in the application for his own determination, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, had regard to Government policy, expressed particularly in PPG6 on major retail development and also to the shopping study carried out for the Greater York authorities, as updated by its author Harvey Coles and by G. L. Hearn. After careful consideration he concluded that there was no evidence that the vitality and viability of the city as a whole would be seriously affected.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 May 1989

WALES

Pollution (Irish Sea)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from local councils in Wales concerning the pollution levels in the Irish sea; what is the general thrust of these representations; what response he has given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Department has received four such almost identical representations. These expressed general concern about the dumping of human and industrial waste and radioactive contamination. The replies explained the initiatives being taken to assess and determine means of reducing the pollution of the Irish sea, and reiterated the Government's decision to extend the North sea conference declaration to all United Kingdom coastal waters.

TRANSPORT

London Buses Ltd

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any intention of privatising London Buses.

Mr. Portillo: I hope to see London Buses Ltd go into the private sector in due course.

London City Airport (Security)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of recent security breaches, he has any plans to improve security arrangements at London City airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The aircraft concerned were not in service when the incidents occurred. The aviation security programme requires aircraft to be checked before they are brought into service. These requirements are designed to protect passengers' safety and I believe that they were met.

London Transportation Studies

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been made for the continuation of London transportation studies services.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's contract with the MVA consultancy has been extended. It will now run until October 1991, with an option for a further year. The earlier plan to hold a competition for a new contract proved impracticable because of additional work required for the Department's London studies and the need to maintain continuity in the model's development programme. We are, however, taking steps to involve other consultants in our use of the model.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Vagrancy

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the annual cost to public funds of the time expended by court officials, the Crown Prosecution Service and police officers, in the metropolitan police area, in the arrest, detention and prosecution of young people under section 3 of the Vagrancy Act 1824.

The Attorney-General: None. This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost to the taxpayer.

Hosni E. Forhat

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received regarding the implications for administrative routines within the Law Officers' Department of the case of Hosni E. Forhat.

The Attorney-General: None.

Category A Prisoners

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what policy is adopted by his Department as to the location of trials of category A prisoners in relation to the original hearings and holding prison; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Section 7 of the Magistrates Courts Act 1980 requires the magistrates' court to have regard to the convenience of the defence, the prosecution and the witnesses, expediting of the trial and to any directions given by or on behalf of the Lord Chief Justice with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor. The directions governing the committal of cases for trial to particular Crown court centres are made by the Lord Chief Justice and may, from time to time, be altered in detail on his behalf by presiding judges; and each petty sessional division will normally commit to a particular Crown court centre in accordance with those directions.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Old Age Programmes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list showing expenditure on programmes for old age as a proportion of gross domestic product at market prices, for European Community member states, for each year since 1983, excluding expenditure on support for people living in residential and nursing homes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 14 April at columns *741-42*. I regret that further information as requested by my hon. Friend is not available.

Widows

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many women who were in receipt of widowed mothers allowance before September 1988 would have received a full widow's pension if the qualifying age had not been raised by five years;

(2) how many widows suffered a lowering of their income as a result of the qualifying age for the widow's pension being raised by five years in September 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Entitlement to widowed mother's allowance and widow's pension changed on 11 April 1988. All women who were in receipt of widowed mother's allowance before then will be entitled to widow's pension on the age bands that existed before the reform changes were made. The increase, by five years, of the age bands will have no effect on these women. Women widowed after 11 April will be entitled to widow's pension based on the post reforms age bands; the numbers affected between 11 April and September 1988 cannot be determined accurately. However it is estimated that some 15,000 newly widowed women will have no title or a reduced title to benefit in the first year.

Income Support

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children were in families on income support broken down into England, Scotland and Wales in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest estimates are:

	Numbers
England	1,830,000
Scotland	236,000
Wales	129,000

NATIONAL FINANCE

Premium Bonds

Mr. David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the proposal to raise the lowest denomination of premium bond which can be purchased to £100.

Mr. Lawson: The increase is designed to secure administrative savings, following a regular review of the terms of all National Savings products. Sales of less than £100 represent only 12 per cent. of the total value of purchases but incur a disproportionate share of costs. The average purchase is now over £150. Parents, guardians or grandparents will still be able to make minimum purchases of £10 on behalf of children under 16.

Finance Bill (Notes on Clauses)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place copies of notes on all clauses of the Finance Bill in the Library.

Mr. Major: Yes. Notes on clauses to be taken in Committee of the whole House have already been deposited in the House Library and those to be taken in Standing Committee will be deposited shortly.

Value Added Tax

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will zero rate for value added tax purposes taxi card journeys.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* No. Under article 28 of the sixth EC VAT directive, the United Kingdom is not permitted to enlarge the scope of the zero rates in force on 31 December 1975.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers (Incentive Allowances)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish the estimates for school years 1988-89 and 1989-90 mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member for Bridgend of 20 April, *Official Report*, columns *269-70*; what evidence is available to his Department in relation to the accuracy of that estimate for school year 1988-89; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what account he took of the evidence in appendix B of Cm. 625, concerning the numbers of allowances being paid in September 1988, in preparing the estimates for school years 1988-89 and 1989-90 mentioned in his answer to the hon. Member on 20 April, columns *269-70*; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated numbers of incentive allowances in ordinary schools in September 1988 and September 1989 were set out in circular 3/88. They formed the basis for the table submitted in evidence to the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions in October 1988 and reproduced in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 April 1989, at columns *269-70*. The figures are as follows:

	September 1988	*September 1989*
A	43,000	61,000
B	59,600	50,400
C	9,300	18,700
D	27,000	25,500
E	8,000	9,500
TOTAL	146,900	165,100

The evidence reproduced in appendix B of Cm. 625 was subsequently made available to the committee by the local authorities' conditions of service advisory board (LACSAB). The data suggest that the total number of incentive allowances awarded in the 1988-89 academic year broadly reflected the number assumed for that year in circular 3/88. No further information is at present available.

Geography

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to set up a working group to recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for geography within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are today establishing a working group for geography. The group will advise on attainment targets and programmes of study for geography within the national curriculum in England and Wales.

I have sent supplementary guidance to the group's chairman, a copy of which I have placed in the Library. We are grateful to Sir Leslie Fielding, the vice-chancellor

of Sussex university, for agreeing to take the chair of the group. The vice-chairman will be Professor David Thomas, pro-vice chancellor and professor of geography at the university of Birmingham. Other members of the group are:

Mrs. Kay Edwards—Head of Geography, Penglais Comprehensive School, Aberystwyth

Mr. Richard Lethbridge—Former chairman, Tower Steel (Holdings) plc, now a branch secretary of the Country Landowners' Association

Mrs. Wendy Morgan—Recently retired headmistress of Elmsett Primary School, Suffolk

Dr. Keith Paterson—Senior Lecturer in Geography, Liverpool Institute of Higher Education

Mrs. Eleanor Rawling—National Co-ordinator, Geography Schools and Industry Project

Mr. Michael Storm—Staff Inspector for Geography and Environmental Studies, Inner London Education Authority

Mrs. Rachel Thomas—Member of the Countryside Commission and Exmoor National Park Committee

Mr. Rex Walford—Lecturer in Geography and Education, University of Cambridge

Further appointments may be announced in due course.

The group will begin work at once. I have asked for interim advice by 31 October 1989 and final advice by 30 April 1990. This will enable attainment targets and programmes of study for geography to begin to be introduced in schools from the autumn of 1991.

The terms of reference are as follows:

NATIONAL CURRICULUM GEOGRAPHY WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

1. The Education Reform Act 1988 provides for the establishment of a National Curriculum of core and other foundation subjects for pupils of compulsory school age in England and Wales. The Act empowers the Secretary of State to specify, as he considers appropriate for each foundation subject, including geography, that there should be clear objectives—attainment targets—for the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16; and to promote them, programmes of study describing the content, skills and processes which need to be covered during each key stage of compulsory education. Taken together, the attainment targets and programmes of study will provide the basis for assessing a pupil's performance, in relation both to expected attainment and to the next steps needed for the pupil's development.

2. Both the objectives (attainment targets divided into up to 10 levels of attainment) and the means of achieving them (programmes of study) should leave scope for teachers to use their professional talents and skills to develop their own schemes of work, within a statutory framework which is known to all. *It is the task of the Geography Working Group to advise on that framework for geography.*

The Task

3. The Working Group is asked to submit an interim report to the Secretaries of State by 31 October 1989 outlining and, as far as possible, exemplifying:

(i) the contribution which geography should make to the overall school curriculum and how that will inform the Group's thinking about attainment targets and programmes of study;

(ii) its provisional thinking about the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils of different abilities and maturities should be expected to have attained and be able to demonstrate by reference to defined levels of attainment, at key ages; and the profile components into which attainment targets should be grouped; and

(iii) its thinking about the programmes of study which would be consistent with the attainment targets provisionally identified.

4. By 30 April 1990 the Working Group is to submit a final report to the Secretaries of State setting out and justifying its final recommendations on attainment targets and the programmes of study for geography.

Approach

5. In carrying out its task the Group should consult informally and selectively with relevant interests and have regard to the statutory Orders on mathematics, science and English and to the work of the other subject groups—design and technology and history. Additionally, the Group should take account of:

(i) the broad framework for assessment and testing announced by the Government on 7 June 1988 and subsequent development of it in the light of advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council;

(ii) the contributions which geography can make to learning about other subjects and cross-curricular themes including, in particular, environmental education, and which they in turn can make to learning in geography;

(iii) best practice and the results of any relevant research and development; and

(iv) the issues covered in the supplementary guidance to the Group's Chairman.

Assessment

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received advice from the School Examinations and Assessment Council about assessing and reporting achievement in the light of national curriculum requirements.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I received a letter from the chairman of SEAC, Mr. Philip Halsey, on 28 April conveying the council's interim views on the future evolution of assessment and reporting at age 16 to which I replied on 4 May. Copies of the exchange of correspondence have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Education Support Grant

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish his proposals for the 1990-91 ESG programme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today written to the local authority associations proposing a programme to support expenditure of £140 million in 1990-91. A total of £50 million of this will be expenditure on new activities or extensions, and the remainder will represent continuing support for activities begun in 1989-90 or earlier years.

My proposals are set out in full in the following table.

My priority in drawing up the programme has again been to continue support for the implementation of the Education Reform Act. The programme that I am proposing expands the valuable work begun in 1989-90 to help LEA with the introduction of local management of schools and of the national curriculum. It also offers LEAs valuable support in other areas such as health education and provision for difficult pupils.

I am proposing to increase the resources available for local management of schools, in particular for the purchase of management and curriculum information systems. Additional money will also be made available for the training of school and college governors, and I am proposing extra support for the core and other foundation subjects of the national curriculum.

Following the report by the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools, my proposals also include £2·5

million expenditure to help LEAs with the development of support services for the most difficult pupils, and a similar sum for work to improve school attendance. £2 million will be available for measures to help combat vandalism and arson.

The ESG to help combat the misuse of drugs has produced some very valuable work, and I now propose to extend its scope to take in other aspects of preventive health education, including alcohol abuse. I am proposing £2 million expenditure on projects to improve teacher recruitment.

I am also proposing to provide further funding for IT in schools and computerised management information systems for FE colleges.

Education Support Grants 1990-91—Proposed Programme

£ million

	New Expenditure and Extensions	*Committed and Continuing Expenditure*	*Total*
ERA Related			
1. Local Management of Schools	11·5	25·0	36·5
2. Management Information Systems for FE	4·0	7·1	11·1
3. Training for School Governors	1·0	4·1	5·1
4. Training for FE College Governors	2·0	—	2·0
5. Planning and Delegation to Colleges	(ILBs only) 0·1	1·2	1·3
6. Basic Curriculum and Assessment	9·5	10·0	19·5
7. LEA Inspection[1]	—	3·0	3·0
8. IT in Schools	9·0	4·8	13·8
9. English Language in the Curriculum	—	8·2	8·2
10. Primary Science and Technology	—	7·3	7·3
11. Maths in Schools	—	3·2	3·2
Other Priorities			
12. Difficult Pupils	2·5	—	2·5
13. Improving School Attendance	2·5	—	2·5
14. Combating Vandalism and Arson	2·0	—	2·0
15. Health Education	4·0	—	4·0
16. Teacher Recruitment	2·0	—	2·0
17. Youth Leaders in Inner Cities	—	3·9	3·9
18. Learning by Achievement	—	2·3	2·3
19. Adult Literacy	—	1·7	1·7
20. Open Learning	—	1·3	1·3
21. Educational Guidance	—	1·2	1·2
22. Education for a Multi-Ethnic Society	—	2·3	2·3
23. PORTAGE	—	1·4	1·4
24. Social Responsibility	—	1·3	1·3
25. Rural Primary Schools	—	0·6	0·6
Total	50·1	89·9	140·0
Grant[2]	—	—	83·0

[1]Second tranche of support for LEA Inspection is included in the basic curriculum and assessment activity.

[2]Grant will be paid at 60 per cent. on all activities except science and technology in primary schools and maths in schools, where committed expenditure will continue to be paid at the 1989-90 rate of 50 per cent.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Risley Remand Centre

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the cost of damage at Risley remand centre following the disturbances over the bank holiday weekend; how the remedial work will be financed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are now establishing the extent of the damage caused by disturbances at HM remand centre, Risley and will then assess what repairs are justified in view of the imminent redevelopment of this establishment, what they will cost and how they should be paid for.

Prison Quarters, Wayland

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why a four-bedroomed prison quarter at Wayland prison with a historic cost of £55,942 in 1984 was given a valuation of £40,500 in 1987; and if he will urgently review his Department's procedures for making such evaluations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prison quarters at Wayland were built at the same time as the prison. Building was completed by the Property Services Agency in 1984. The valuation in 1987 was made by the district valuer of the Department of Inland Revenue to enable the Home Office to calculate a sale price, after allowing for any discount under the department's discount sale scheme. The rules of that scheme stipulate that sales should not take place at less than the cost of providing the quarter, including the cost of the land, site development works and any administration costs (the historic cost). The Property Services Agency provides details of the historic cost and this has to be ascertained from the total contract price for building the prison establishment and any ancillary items such as quarters for staff. We have already agreed that where a current valuation is less than the historic cost, an offer of sale at the valuation price can be made. Further urgent consideration is being given to whether there is scope to make any further concession in offering properties for sale where the historic cost is an impediment to granting the normal discount.

Mr. Osborne Rutherford

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Mr. Osborne Rutherford, prisoner No. C42357, Her Majesty's prison Wandsworth was kept without clothes in a strong box from 9 February to 23 February; and which doctor sanctioned his detention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 9 February, whilst Mr. Rutherford was at Parkhurst prison, he was placed in a special cell on the authority of the governor in charge under prison rule 45 which empowers the temporary confinement in a special cell of a refractory or violent prisoner. The decision was taken because of Mr. Rutherford's threatening behaviour towards staff.

In accordance with standard procedures, the medical officer was advised of the decision and indicated that there were no medical grounds why Mr. Rutherford should not be so confined. Subsequently, Mr. Rutherford engaged in a dirty protest and it was considered necessary to continue to hold him in the special cell until 23 February. The requirements in respect of the use of a special cell were followed during this period. After the initial 24 hours, the need for continued confinement was authorised periodically by members of the board of visitors who visited Mr. Rutherford. Mr. Rutherford was also visited regularly by a governor and by a medical officer.

Although Mr. Rutherford's normal prison clothing was removed, he was provided with a suit of protective clothing to wear whilst in the special cell.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped Prisoners

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the extent to which mentally ill and mentally handicapped people are in prison as a result of under-provision of community care facilities.

Mr. Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to earlier replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 20 March at columns *405-7*. These gave details of studies at present taking place on the profile of mentally disordered offenders in the prison system and on the use made by the courts of hospital and restriction orders when sentencing mentally disordered offenders. When a court considers that an offender needs psychiatric treatment but not to be detained in a hospital, it may make a probation order with a requirement that the probationer undergoes psychiatric treatment, or it may make a guardianship order, which places the offender under the authority of a local authority social services department or approved person. The guardian may then require the patient to live at a specified place and attend a place for treatment. The availability of care facilities in the local community is only one of a range of factors which courts have to consider when deciding on the most suitable sentence for such an offender.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners held in police cells at the most recent available date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sixty six, on 28 April.

Rapists

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what treatment is available within prison for mentally disordered inmates serving sentences for rape; and what steps are taken to seek to prevent such men reoffending when they leave prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sex offenders would normally be identified early in the prison reception process as requiring psychiatric assessment. Such assessment may be carried out by a suitably qualified prison medical officer or by a visiting specialist. Not all sex offenders are found to be grossly disturbed or in need of treatment whether from doctors, psychiatrists or psychologists. Where the diagnosis does suggest that the inmate's behaviour was the result of an underlying mental illness, specific treatment would be provided for that illness. If the behaviour was secondary to an aspect of personality disorder, the inmate might be offered psychotherapy, group therapy, behaviour therapy or a combination of these. Some prisoners are transferred to Grendon prison where the entire regime is that of a therapeutic community for such help.

The prison medical and probation services would be concerned in making arrangements for the continuing care, medical or other, of such inmates on release. The appropriate police force would be notified.

Prison Medical Officers

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the working group, chaired by the president of the Royal College of Physicians, set up to advise the director of prison medical services on qualifications and training for prison medical officers, to complete its work; and if he will place a copy of its report in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report was completed recently and submitted by the president of the Royal College of Physicians to the chief medical officer. At this early stage there are no plans for its release.

Crowd Pressure (Deaths)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the total deaths reported in the decades 1959 to 1968, 1969 to 1978 and 1979 to 1988, inclusive, resulting from crowd pressures or public disorder in the following circumstances *(a)* political demonstrations, *(b)* queueing for places of entertainment, other than sports meetings, *(c)* queueing for or occurring at sports meetings, other than football matches and *(d)* queueing for public transport.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

The exact information requested is not available.

Prior to 1979, the international classification of diseases (ICD) did not allow for sufficiently detailed information of this nature; the current (ninth) revision includes the code E917.1:

"Striking against or struck accidentally by objects or persons, caused by a crowd, by collective fear or panic."

In the period 1979-87 inclusive there were three deaths where this code was assigned as the underlying cause of death, but there is insufficient information on the death certificate to allocate them to any of the categories requested.

HEALTH

Ambulances

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of ambulances for each regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table.

Ambulance Services
Total number of ambulance service vehicles used to transport patients

Regional Health Authority	*1987-88*
England	6,482
Northern	479
Yorkshire	680
Trent	698
East Anglia	235
North West Thames	200
North East Thames	150
South East Thames	300
South West Thames	[1]1,121
Wessex	247
Oxford	283
South Western	438
West Midlands	702
Mersey	393
North Western	556

Source: York Health Authority—National Ambulance Service Survey 1987-88.
The following types of vehicles have been included in the above figures:
2—trolley emergency.
2—trolley dual purpose.
Sitting case seats only (under 14).
Sitting case seats stretcher capacity.
Sitting case seats + lift mechanism.
Car (with or without stretcher capacity).
Bus—14 or more seats with or without stretcher or wheelchair capacity.
[1] Includes London ambulance service.

Defibrillators

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of ambulances for each region which carry defibrillators.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected centrally but I understand that as at March 1989, the numbers were as follows:

	Number
Northern	65
Yorkshire	75
Trent	125
East Anglian	64
North West Thames	45
North East Thames	51
South East Thames	76
South West Thames	[1]231
Wessex	147
Oxford	103
South Western	149
West Midland	104
Mersey	51
North Western	129

[1] Includes London Ambulance Service.

Clinical Effectiveness

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will consider investing resources in a major database to collect information on patient demographics, patient diagnosis, clinical findings and clinical treatment to facilitate the creation of routine monitoring systems in order to improve clinical practice and resource allocation in the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Following implementation of the Körner recommendations in April 1987, each region now provides quarterly a set of data about every patient using a hospital bed, to a national database at the OPCS. These data include age, diagnosis and operative procedures. More detailed clinical information to assist doctors and others in their management of patient care is now being collected locally as part of the resource management initiative.

Computer Systems

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the cost of providing computer systems to *(a)* hospitals and *(b)* general practitioners to enable them to implement the National Health Service White Paper proposals will be found from additional Treasury funding or whether it will be deducted from current National Health Service provision.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have made it clear that the cost of implementing the White Paper proposals will not be met at the expense of plans for patient care.

Prescriptions

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of National Health Service prescriptions are written for *(a)* people aged over 65 years and *(b)* the chronic sick.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information in the form requested. However, of all prescriptions dispensed in 1988, 41·2 per cent. were dispensed to people over pensionable age (men aged over 65 and women over 60).

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the mechanism proposed under the National Health Service White Paper provisions to enable hospitals to become self-governing; and how a majority view of those working in the hospitals will be obtained.

Mr. Mellor: The process for establishing an NHS hospital trust will be as simple and flexible as possible. The chief executive of the NHS management board wrote to all regional general managers on 14 March about the preparation of initial expressions of interest; a copy of that letter (reference: EL(89)MB/58) has been placed in the Library of the House. Further guidance will be provided in due course. Staff will be given opportunities to express views on applications; the precise arrangements for this will be determined locally.

NHS Reform

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many phone calls have been received from doctors by those manning the contact numbers set out in working papers 3 and 4 of the National Health Service White Paper; and whether at any time the contact numbers have had to be suspended.

Mr. Mellor: Telephone contact points were not in fact supplied in the NHS review working papers, as it was

envisaged that comments would be submitted in writing to the official addresses which were provided. A number of telephone calls from doctors have nevertheless been received routinely by the Department on these subjects but we hold no record of the total.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters his Department has received from general practitioners expressing general support for the National Health Service White Paper proposals; and how many he has received expressing opposition to the proposals.

Mr. Mellor: We have received some 1,300 representations from general practitioners. Many have questions, many support all or some of the proposals, some only refer to specific aspects. It is not possible to distinguish the letters in the way my hon. Friend suggests.

Staff Shortages

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what records are kept of the number of occasions that anaesthetic services have been curtailed because of staff shortages; and what the number of such curtailments was.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally.

Eye Tests

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence is available to him on whether a two-tier system of eye tests would be detrimental to a patient's sight; and whether there are any specific conditions which cannot be detected by test other than the full eye test.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I must ask my hon. Friend to await my consideration of the results of the present consultations on regulations governing sight test.

Advertising Campaigns

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the expenditure by Government and Government-funded health education agencies on mass media advertising campaigns on the following issues: *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* drugs, *(d)* dental health, *(e)* AIDs, *(f)* family planning, *(g)* immunisation, *(h)* coronary heart disease, *(i)* the "Look After Your Heart" campaign, and *(j)* others, for each year 1978-79 to 1987-88;

(2) what was the total expenditure by his Department and Government-funded health education agencies on mass media advertising campaigns on health-related issues in each financial year since 1978-79 to 1987-88;

(3) what is the total expenditure from 1979 to date by Government and Government-funded health education agencies on mass media advertising for each of the following health campaigns *(a)* smoking, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* drugs, *(d)* AIDs, *(e)* dental health, *(f)* immunisation, *(g)* family planning, *(h)* coronary heart disease and *(i)* others.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The total expenditure by the Department on mass media advertising is as follows:

	£'000
1978-79	n/a
1979-80	337
1980-81	589
1981-82	825
1982-83	676
1983-84	1,167
1984-85	1,412
1985-86	3,259
1986-87	7,811
1987-88	6,668
1988-89	5,741

Information on the expenditure on mass media advertising by the former Health Education Council and the Health Education Authority is not available. The total expenditure by these agencies on publicity was as follows:

	£'000
1978-79	1,380
1979-80	1,244
1980-81	1,712
1981-82	1,824
1982-83	3,675
1983-84	3,683
1984-85	2,705
1985-86	4,649
1986-87	n/a
1987-88	4,996
1988-89	6,104

Information on the total expenditure by campaign by the Health Education Council and Health Education Authority is as follows:

	1978-79 £'000	*1979-80 £'000*	*1980-81 £'000*	*1981-82 £'000*	*1982-83 £'000*	*1983-84 £'000*	*1984-85 £'000*	*1985-86 £'000*	*1986-87 £'000*	*1987-88 £'000*	*1988-89 £'000*
Smoking	325	407	700	892	2,391	2,630	1,624	2,346	[2]	—	247
Alcohol	190	25	217	121	263	311	—	327	[2]	—	—
Drugs	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]	—	—
Dental health	147	102	38	137	265	167	311	267	[2]	—	100
AIDS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]	3,369	4,853
Family planning	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]	—	—
Immunisation	27	62	—	—	—	—	16	654	[2]	—	550
Coronary heart disease	691	645	757	674	756	575	754	1,055	[2]	1,608	354
Look After Your Heart	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[2]	[1]	—
Others	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	[2]	19	—

[1] Included in coronary heart disease.
[2] No information available.

Information on the expenditure on mass media advertising by campaign by the Department of Health is as follows:

	1978-79 £'000	1979-80 £'000	1980-81 £'000	1981-82 £'000	1982-83 £'000	1983-84 £'000	1984-85 £'000	1985-86 £'000	1986-87 £'000	1987-88 £'000	1988-89 £'000
Smoking	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	420	283	—	—
Alcohol	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drugs	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	298	1,391	1,707	[1]	1,918
Dental health	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
AIDS	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	420	4,340	5,419	79
Family planning	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Immunisation	[2]	154	—	—	240	—	—	—	—	—	—
Coronary heart disease	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Look After Your Heart	[2]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,100
Others	[2]	183	589	825	436	1,167	1,114	1,028	1,481	1,249	1,644

[1] Joint anti-injecting AIDS/drugs campaign.
[2] No information available.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the percentage of the work force of the United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Germany and Japan employed in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information on common international definitions is as follows:

Manufacturing employment as a percentage of total civilian employment (1986)

	Percentages
United Kingdom	22·5
United States	19·1
France	22·6
Germany	32·2
Japan	24·7

Source: OECD Labour Force Statistics 1966-86.

PRIME MINISTER

French Revolution

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will send a congratulatory communication to the President of the French Republic on the 200th anniversary of the French revolution.

The Prime Minister: I hope to be able to convey an appropriate message in person.

Sultan of Brunei

Mr. Gould: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met the Sultan of Brunei; and what was discussed.

The Prime Minister: I last met the Sultan of Brunei on 27 April. Our discussions covered a number of bilateral and international issues.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister what is Government expenditure per head in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The following table shows identifiable public expenditure per head for each of the four countries of the United Kingdom in 1987-88, the latest year for which information is available:

	£ per head
England	2,063
Wales	2,370
Scotland	2,676
Northern Ireland	3,097

The term "identifiable expenditure" refers to expenditure that can be identified from official records as having been incurred in a particular country. Total identifiable expenditure accounts for just over 80 per cent. of total departmental public expenditure; it excludes expenditure on defence, overseas aid and other overseas services which are deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole. It also excludes Government net lending to, and the market and overseas borrowing of, the public corporations (including nationalised industries), due to the difficulty of allocating this finance to expenditure in a particular country.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow (East End)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the adequacy of the new management structure in the east end of Glasgow which was set up following the Government's ending of the GEAR project in March 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: These successor arrangements are primarily the responsibility of Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council and are supported by the Scottish Development Agency and the private sector. I am not aware of any criticism of the arrangements.

Council House Sales

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to extend the right-to-buy discount; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans at present to make changes to the current right to buy arrangements, although we are continually monitoring the effect of our policies to determine whether any further measures are necessary to stimulate diversification of ownership.

The sustained level of interest from public sector tenants seeking to purchase their homes is evidence of the continuing success of the Government's right-to-buy policy.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Management

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the waste disposal authorities in England have now deposited waste management plans with his Department, pursuant to the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 2 February 1989 at columns *350-52*. Since then we have received no more completed waste disposal plans, although Hampshire and Lincolnshire county councils have sent us preliminary draft plans.

My noble Friend the Minister of State, Department of the Environment wrote to waste disposal authorities who had not yet submitted plans again on 18 April.

Ocean Incineration

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has given those companies currently using ocean incineration concerning waste reduction.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials have advised companies who currently hold licences for incineration of waste at sea of the need to reduce quantities of such wastes in the light of the recommendations of the North sea conference to end the dumping of polluting materials in the North sea at the earliest practical date. HM inspectorate of pollution has held discussions with the companies and further discussions are proposed.

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes that individuals will be able to be registered as supporters of more than one football club under the proposed membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: It will be for the football membership authority to draw up the details of the scheme and submit proposals to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The report of the working party which I chaired recommended that members of the scheme should have only one card but that this should be valid for any designated match including the 92 Football League clubs.

Spaying

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take urgent steps to introduce a policy of education concerning the spaying of dogs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

This is not a matter for central Government. Those who wish advice on such matters can obtain it from one of the voluntary bodies concerned with the welfare of dogs.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a specific grant allocation to assist people with the cost of having their animals spayed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has no powers to make grants for these purposes.

Football Spectators

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the current maximum spectator capacity for each of the 92 Football League clubs.

Mr. Moynihan: The following figures are the most up to date available to the Football League, though I understand that they may not be precisely accurate in every case.

Division One

	Numbers
Arsenal	57,000
Aston Villa	48,100
Charlton Athletic	38,366
Coventry City	29,800
Derby County	26,500
Everton	50,271
Liverpool	45,628
Luton Town	14,470
Manchester United	56,385
Middlesbrough	30,647
Millwall	25,850
Newcastle United	37,703
Norwich City	26,812
Nottingham Forest	35,367
Queen's Park Rangers	27,330
Sheffield Wednesday	54,324
Southampton	25,175
Tottenham Hotspur	34,258
West Ham United	35,556
Wimbledon	16,000

Division Two

	Numbers
A.F.C. Bournemouth	12,038
Barnsley	36,987
Birmingham City	38,408
Blackburn Rovers	21,956
Bradford City	15,519
Brighton and Hove Albion	29,026
Chelsea	43,900
Crystal Palace	38,366
Hull City	19,797
Ipswich Town	37,345
Leeds United	39,133
Leicester City	31,057
Manchester City	51,993
Oldham Athletic	21,949
Oxford United	14,006
Plymouth Argyle	28,000
Portsmouth	29,664
Shrewsbury Town	16,000
Stoke City	35,812
Sunderland	37,775
Swindon Town	19,652
Walsall	16,018
Watford	26,956
West Bromwich Albion	35,000

Division Three

	Numbers
Aldershot	12,000
Blackpool	11,500
Bolton Wanderers	29,000
Brentford	10,827
Bristol City	30,800
Bristol Rovers	5,100
Bury	15,770
Cardiff City	39,500
Chester City	8,200
Chesterfield	7,652

	Numbers
Fulham	25,680
Gillingham	19,581
Huddersfield Town	31,000
Mansfield Town	10,468
Northampton Town	10,250
Notts County	24,045
Port Vale	16,800
Preston North End	20,000
Reading	17,100
Sheffield United	44,000
Southend United	10,753
Swansea City	21,860
Wigan Athletic	12,500
Wolverhampton Wanderers	28,051

Division Four

	Numbers
Burnley	21,761
Cambridge United	10,000
Carlisle United	18,000
Colchester United	4,900
Crewe Alexandra	5,500
Darlington	13,551
Doncaster Rovers	7,500
Exeter City	9,230
Grimsby Town	20,865
Halifax Town	10,000
Hartlepool United	6,650
Hereford United	16,119
Leyton Orient	26,569
Lincoln City	13,189
Peterborough United	17,150
Rochdale	12,000
Rotherham United	17,913
Scarborough	10,000
Scunthorpe United	11,000
Stockport County	6,000
Torquay United	6,000
Tranmere Rovers	16,000
Wrexham	22,682
York City	14,109

Pollution (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for the county of South Yorkshire for each of the last four years, the number of pollution incidents caused by *(a)* silage liquor, *(b)* farmyard slurry and *(c)* other pollutants; and what action was taken in each case.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from the Yorkshire water authority that the numbers of water pollution incidents in South Yorkshire in each of the last four years, and the action taken are as follows:

Numbers of water pollution incidents in South Yorkshire

Year	Cause of pollution: Silage	Slurry	All Other Sources	Number of prosecutions
1985	20	10	13	12
1986	2	15	9	12
1987	16	24	8	7
1988	24	11	40	7

Tree Planting

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what impact on the environment the 1988 Budget decision to end schedule D reliefs on tree planting had; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The changes to the tax and grant arrangements made last year were designed to provide a more widely acceptable system of support for private forestry. The key aims of the new woodland grant include enhancing the landscape, creating new wildlife habitats and encouraging the multipurpose management of woodlands. The increased importance of grants has strengthened the Forestry Commission's procedures as a means of controlling the environmental impact of forestry and ensuring that the right trees are planted in the right places. The effects of the changes will be carefully monitored during the transitional period, but it is too early to make a detailed assessment as yet.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what papers will be presented on behalf of his Department; and which departmental officials will be present, at the fifth summer school on radioactive waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No paper is to be presented on behalf of the Department. An inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be present to deliver a paper in a personal capacity.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are in hand to ensure adequate information flows between community charge registration officers and certification officers in educational establishments in London; and what representations on this matter he has received from the Association of London Authorities, London Boroughs Association and bodies representing educational institutions.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* Discussions are taking place, organised by my Department, between all the local authority associations and bodies representing educational institutions, on the practical aspects of registering students for the community charge. It is hoped to conclude these discussions in the near future and to issue a practice note giving advice to all parties on these matters.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue guidance to general practitioners on the exemptions from community charge for severely mentally impaired persons; and what discussions his Department has had with the British Medical Association on this matter.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* This matter is being handled on my behalf by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Health, whose officials are in discussion with the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association. I understand that it is hoped to conclude the discussions shortly and to issue guidance to general practitioners as soon as possible afterwards.

Planning Permissions (Revocation)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the addresses of sites where his Department has reimbursed a local planning authority as a result of a revocation of planning permission.

Mr. Howard: With the exception of the limited circumstances set out in section 167 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, there is no provision for the Secretary of state to reimburse to local planning authorities the compensation payable when planning permission is revoked. Section 167 relates only to cases where, if planning permission had originally been refused, the Secretary of State would have been liable to pay compensation under part VII of the Act. There have been five such cases since 1979.

Business Rate

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will make further information available on the proposed reform of the business rate.

Mr. Gummer: My Department has today published a free booklet called "Time for Change: the new Business Rate". This explains the changeover to the new uniform business rate which will take place in April 1990, the up-to-date revaluation, and the Government's proposals for transitional arrangements, including those to help small businesses.

The booklet is being distributed widely to industrial and commercial organisations and others with an interest in business matters. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Council House Sales

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings each local authority has sold under the right to buy legislation, or voluntarily, since April 1979.

Mr. Trippier: I have placed in the Library a table giving available information up to December 1988. It shows year-by-year information since 1984-85 together with cumulative figures since April 1979.

Conservation Areas (Trees)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what particulars he has specified in relation to the provision of section 61(A)(7) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 concerning the need for district councils to keep a register of trees in conservation areas.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 27 April 1989 c. 657]:* Section 61(A)(7) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 places a duty on district and London borough councils to compile and keep available for inspection a register of notices served on the council of intention to carry out work on trees in conservation areas, where such trees are not already protected by tree preservation orders or otherwise exempt. It also empowers the Secretary of State to determine what particulars should be included in such registers. The following matters were specified for this purpose in DOE circular 36/78:

(a) the address of the land on which the tree stands and sufficient information to identify the tree;
(b) details of the work proposed;
(c) the date of the notice and who served it;
(d) the decision of the authority in respect of the tree (when made), the date of any decision and the name of the authority; and
(e) an index for tracing entries.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated number of settlers from Greece who are now living in the southern part of Cyprus and who have been granted Cyprus passports since 31 December 1963.

Mrs. Chalker: According to the Republic of Cyprus statistical abstract for 1985 and 1986, the number of "immigrants" from Greece (whose status is not further defined) in the period 1981-86 was 24. We have no statistics for the rest of the period covered by my hon. Friend's question.

House of Fraser

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department received any inquiries from Kleinwort Benson about the history of the Al-Fayed brothers in the course of the takeover of the House of Fraser.

Mr. Eggar: While the prosecution authorities are considering the report of the inspectors appointed on 9 April 1987 by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate the affairs of the House of Fraser Holdings plc, it would not be appropriate for me to comment.

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will initiate collective action by European Community Governments against South Africa for its use of its embassies for illegal actions in host countries.

Mrs. Chalker: We expect all countries to abide by their obligations under the Vienna convention especially "to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving state".

There are no plans for collective EC action against South Africa.

We are carefully examining the implications of the events that led up to the arrests in Paris on 21 April.

North Atlantic Assembly

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in the composition of the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) has replaced the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) as a member of the delegation.

United Kingdom Embassies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries presently do not have a United Kingdom embassy; what is the reason for the absence; and what steps are being taken to establish an embassy in each case.

Mrs. Chalker *[pursuant to the reply, 27 April 1989 c. 595]:* Of those territories recognised by the United Kingdom as independent sovereign states, the United Kingdom does not have an embassy, a high commission, or a consulate-general accredited to the following:

Albania
Argentina
Bhutan
Cambodia
Iran
Libya
Syria

The United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations with Albania or Cambodia.

The United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations with the Kingdom of Bhutan but maintains friendly contacts and conducts official business with its embassy in New Delhi.

Iran broke diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in March this year. British interests are represented by the Swedish embassy in Tehran, where there are no United Kingdom staff.

There are British interest sections with United Kingdom staff in the embassies of protecting powers in Argentina, Libya and Syria.

The staff of the British embassy in Afghanistan have been withdrawn for security reasons.

There are no plans at present to establish additional representative offices.

DEFENCE

Volunteer Gliding Schools

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of volunteer gliding schools which at present have no airfield in the part of the United Kingdom which they were established to serve.

Mr. Neubert: Two volunteer gliding schools established to serve the north-east and south coast of England are currently without an airfield.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can give details of the areas of the United Kingdom which are without a volunteer gliding school; and what proposals his Department has to establish volunteer gliding schools in these areas.

Mr. Neubert: The north-east, north-west, and south coast of England are poorly served by volunteer gliding schools. We are currently examining the possibility of acquiring an ex-RAF site in the north-east.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many volunteer gliding schools are operational; and how many are currently in suspense.

Mr. Neubert: Twenty-eight are operational and two are in suspense.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of officers and instructors currently on the strength of volunteer gliding schools.

Mr. Neubert: Volunteer gliding schools currently have a strength of 235 officers and 233 civilian gliding instructors.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of Volunteer Reserve officers on the staff of volunteer gliding schools who have over 25 years' service.

Mr. Neubert: Seven.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can give details of the type of motor glider which has been selected to replace the Venture glider at volunteer gliding schools.

Mr. Neubert: I refer my hon. Friend to the written answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 10 January at column *533*.

Z-berths

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of a Z-berth; if Z-berths have permanent safety precautions against radiological hazards; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the locations of all the Z-berths in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A Z-berth is a berth designated for occasional operational or recreational visits by nuclear-powered warships. Its safety arrangements will include a public safety scheme prepared after discussion with the local authorities and civil emergency services, which will provide for a Royal Naval incident commander and a naval emergency monitoring team in the area to stand by throughout any such visit to respond to an emergency. The monitoring team has access to a supply of potassium iodate tablets, and carries out monitoring during the visit.

The United Kingdom Z-berths are at Barrow-in-Furness, Barry, Brodick bay, Campbeltown, Cardiff, Coulport and Loch Long, Devonport and Plymouth Sound, Faslane, the Firth of Forth, Glen Mallan, Lamlash bay, Lerwick and the Shetland isles, Liverpool, Loch Ewe, Loch Fyne, Loch Goil, Loch Striven, Portland, Portree, Portsmouth, Raasay (Broadford bay), Rosyth, Rothesay, Southampton, Spithead, Thurso bay and Torbay.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many meetings there have been between his Department and local and port authorities concerning the possible locating of a Z-berth at Tilbury; when a decision is expected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) on 9 March 1989 at column *677*, my officials have had preliminary discussions with port and local authorities about visits to Tilbury by Royal Navy ships, including nuclear-powered submarines. This remains the position. It would be premature to anticipate the outcome of these discussions at this stage.

Naval Emergency Monitoring Organisation

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the naval emergency monitoring organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The naval emergency monitoring organisation is responsible within the Royal Navy for radioactive monitoring and hazard evaluation, and for advice on radiation levels in the event of an accident involving nuclear weapons or nuclear reactors.

X-berths

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of an X-berth; if X-berths have permanent safety precautions against radiological hazards; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the locations of all the X-berths in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An X-berth is a berth designated for frequent and regular use by nuclear-powered warships, or a berth in a dockyard or naval base which is suitable for the building, refit, repair or maintenance of nuclear-powered warships. All X-berths have as an integral part of their safety arrangements a permanent health physics department, a local emergency monitoring organisation and a local safety plan prepared under the auspices of a local liaison committee. The United Kingdom X-berths are at Barrow-in-Furness, Devonport, Faslane and Rosyth.

Community Charge

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's policy concerning provision of information about service personnel whose home addresses are in Scotland, but who are serving elsewhere, to poll tax registration officers in Scotland.

Mr. Neubert: It is not my Department's policy to provide information to community charge registration officers (CCROs) in Scotland other than the names and addresses of personnel serving in the areas for which the CCRO is responsible.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision has been made to compensate service personnel who are affected by the imposition of the poll tax in Scotland for the fact that they have to meet this cost while their colleagues from other parts of the United Kingdom do not.

Mr. Neubert: Service personnel in Scotland who pay service accommodation charges are no longer required to pay the rates element of such charges, and can offset this amount against their community charge liability. Personnel serving in Scotland who are currently not paying these charges could be in a worse financial position in the interim year to 31 March 1990, than they would be when the community charge applies in England and Wales. In such circumstances I am prepared to consider, exceptionally, claims for some financial compensation.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide advice to service personnel and to Scottish poll tax registration officers concerning the fact that personnel who are serving outwith Scotland, notwithstanding the fact that their home address is in Scotland, are not liable to register for the poll tax in Scotland.

Mr. Neubert: Comprehensive guidance about the liability of service personnel for the community charge has been agreed with community charge registration officers and issued to service personnel. It is based on the general assumption that the sole or main residence of service personnel is where they live in respect of their work, although individuals may seek alternative treatment if their circumstances justify it.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the security implications of the publication of poll tax registers which show the Northern Ireland addresses of personnel who are serving in Northern Ireland, but who may be liable to pay the poll tax in respect of home addresses in Scotland.

Mr. Neubert: In such circumstances, community charge registers will include only the address in Scotland in respect of which community charge liability arises, and not the temporary address in Northern Ireland. All entries for service personnel will be in the same style as those for civilians and will not include their rank.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average rate of increase in *(a)* the non-domestic regional rate and *(b)* the domestic regional rate.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The regional rate for 1989-90, as published in the Rates (Regional rate) Order (Northern Ireland) 1989, is 138·07p, an increase of 12·63 per cent. on last year's rate of 122·59p. This rate applies unadjusted to all non domestic ratepayers.

Domestic ratepayers have benefited, for many years, from an allowance of 12p in the pound in the form of a domestic rate aid grant. This has the effect of reducing the charge on them this year to 126·07p, an increase of 14 per cent. on last year's rate of 110·59p. Since the domestic rate is set at a level 12p lower than the regional rate, its percentage increase is calculated on a lower base and will, therefore, always be higher than the percentage rise in the regional rate.

ENERGY

DIDO Reactor Harwell

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans there are to install a secondary borated water shutdown system into the DIDO reactor at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority are considering the installation of a borated water injection system for the DIDO reactor at Harwell. This would supplement the normal and emergency shutdown systems which the reactor already has.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Health

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what animal health issues have been discussed by the Council of Ministers during the second half of 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The following issues have been discussed during this period:

the recognition of parts of the Community as officially free from classical swine fever;

the recognition of parts of Spain as free from African swine

fever;
the socio-economic implications of the use of antibiotics and Bovine Somatrophin in dairy production;
and the combating of Aujeszky's Disease.

Meat and Bone Meal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has had discussions with other European Economic Community member states about the export of meat and bone meal from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has on European regulations concerning the incorporation of meat and bone meal in ruminant feedstuffs;

(2) what information he has on regulations governing the incorporation of meat and bone meal in animal feedstuffs in each individual European Community member state.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no detailed information on legislation which applies in other member states but the incorporation of meat and bone meal into animal feedingstuffs is permitted in all member states. In the United Kingdom statutory controls prohibit the feeding of ruminants with ruminant protein and all meat and bone meal which is added to feedingstuffs is required to be salmonella free.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what European quality standards apply to the production of meat and bone meal.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are at present no European Community rules applying to the production of meat and bone meal.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received representations from any other country concerning the quality of meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: France, West Germany and Israel have requested additional certification to accompany meat and bone meal exported from the United Kingdom. For France, fresh arrangements have been agreed which are being used by exporters. Certification intended to meet Germany's need is currently being devised. Specific requirements made by Israel are being examined to establish whether suitable measures can be offered their authorities.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has issued any advice to countries which import meat and bone meal rendered in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the quantities of sheep carcases used by the United Kingdom rendering industry; and what proportion of those quantities are rendered into meat and bone meal.

Mr. Donald Thompson: An estimated 15·3 per cent. of material used by the rendering industry comes from sheep. Most of this is slaughterhouse waste, so only a small part would be carcases. The proportion of carcases rendered into meat and bone meal is not known.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the United Kingdom feedstuffs industry first started using meat and bone meal in dairy rations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The date when such material was first used is not known but meat and bone meal have been included in feedstuffs for at least 40 years.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has any new information on the destruction of the agent causing bovine spongiform encephalopathy by rendering.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No new information is yet available beyond that contained in the Southwood report.

Consultation

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, following the report of the National Consumer Council on food policy and the consumer, he intends to alter his Department's arrangements for making public responses to consultation exercises.

Mr. Ryder: I am pleased to announce that, following a recommendation by the National Consumer Council, we will, in future, arrange for a list of names and addresses of respondents to all formal consultation exercises in the food area to be made available to anyone on request. This will enable people to contact relevant organisations if they want to examine responses in detail. We will also consider issuing summaries of the responses, whenever we can.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 8 May 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime (Greater London)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the trends in crime in Greater London during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. John Patten: Information is published in table 7 of Home Office statistical bulletin 7/89, a copy of which is in the Library. More detailed figures for each borough in the Metropolitan police district are also available in the Library. My right hon. Friend has also sent some further details of the figures for their local police force area to all right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies in England and Wales and placed copies of those further details in the Library.

DNA Testing

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received regarding the use of DNA testing.

Mr. Renton: We continue to receive various representations from Members of Parliament and others concerning the use of DNA testing in immigration cases.

Drugs (International Co-operation)

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to strengthen international co-operation against drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are pursuing a wide range of initiatives to strengthen international co-operation. We are working to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the new United Nations Convention against the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. We are negotiating bilateral agreements on the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets. Five such agreements have now been concluded and more are in the pipeline. We are holding a ministerial conference of the Council of Europe's drug co-operation group (the Pompidou Group), under my right hon. Friend's chairmanship, in London on 18-19 May, to discuss the threat posed by cocaine and "crack", confiscation of proceeds derived from illicit trafficking and the problems of AIDS and drug misuse.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, concerning the police role in coping with traffic congestion in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has had no recent discussions with the commissioner on this subject but he has drawn to the commissioner's attention a number of points raised with him by hon. Members representing constituencies in London.

Exeter Prison

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Exeter prison was built; what was the originally intended maximum number of prisoners; what is the number on remand or serving custodial sentences there now; and for how many hours daily an inmate is confined to his cell.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's prison Exeter was opened in 1853 to accommodate about 280 inmates and the young offender remand centre there was added in 1964 to accommodate a further 53. At 28 April 1989 the numbers held compared with the certified normal accommodation were as follows:

	Numbers held	*Certified normal accommodation*
Exeter Prison		
Adult Male	236 sentenced 12 convicted not sentenced 90 unconvicted	254
Female	Nil	3
	338	257
Exeter Remand Centre		
Young Offender	11 sentenced 20 convicted not sentenced 30 unconvicted	53
	399	310

Inmates are confined to their cells for 8-19 hours a day; the average is 16 hours a day.

Jersey (Housing)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the laws governing housing in Jersey.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been three such cases during the last year.

Firefighters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about changes he proposes to the pay and conditions of firefighters.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 3 May to the similar question from my hon. Friend the Member of Stafford (Mr. Cash) at column *113*.

Police Drivers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the training of drivers of fast response cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police driver training has recently been reviewed by a working party set up by the

Association of Chief Police Officers. I understand that the working party's report will be published within the next few weeks.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Minister of State expects to reply to the hon. Member for Stretford's letter of 7 February last regarding Mr. M. F. (Ref. EBO762).

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I wrote to the hon. Member on 28 April.

Street Lighting

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals for the introduction of a statutory obligation to provide adequate street lighting, as a measure to protect against mugging or rape, he is considering.

Mr. John Patten: There is widespread concern, which we share, about the level of violent crime. Improved street lighting may have a part to play in tackling this and other problems, and many local authorities have undertaken improved lighting schemes, a significant number of which have been funded through the Department of the Environment estate action programme. I await with interest the results of the major research study being carried out in Wandsworth on our behalf by Southampton university, assessing the impact of street lighting on crime and the fear of crime.

Summer Time

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement spelling out the differences in summer time by comparison with last year in consequence of the Summer Time Order, 1989; if the order stems from a decision of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Summer Time Order 1989 is necessary to set out the dates of the summer time period for the years 1990 to 1992 inclusive. It also gives effect to the Fifth Council Directive on summer time arrangements in the European Community which was formally adopted by the Council of Ministers in Brussels on 21 December 1988. The effect of the order is to continue the present summer time system for a further three years.

Police Vehicles

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fatal accidents involving motor vehicles driven by police in the course of their duties have occurred from 1 January 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about accidents involving police vehicles is collected and published annually by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. Full information will, therefore, not be available until returns are submitted by individual forces to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary after the end of the year. However, I am aware of nine specific accidents which have occurred since 1 March 1989 arising from police vehicle pursuits, or responses to emergency calls, which have resulted in a total of 12 fatalities.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any intention of issuing new guidelines in respect of pursuit by police vehicles; and if he has any plans to meet chief constables to discuss the matter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police driver training, including police pursuit management, has recently been reviewed by a working party set up by the Association of Chief Police Officers. I understand that its report will be published within the next few weeks. We shall consider it carefully when it is published.

Breath Tests

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of the representations that he has received following his recent consultation about police powers to stop motorists and administer breath tests; and how many of those representations supported *(a)* consolidation of existing powers as no change, *(b)* unfettered discretion to administer breath tests and *(c)* spot checks by the police administered on a random basis.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 1 February, at column *252*, we have received some 3,400 letters from individuals, letters from organisations and petitions on the subject of police powers to require roadside breath tests. Of these, approximately 3,000 express support for extended powers in the form of unfettered discretion, random breath testing or other forms. The remainder suggest that there should be no change to current powers. We shall consider these responses carefully, including whether they should be placed in the Library.

Sunday Trading

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether his proposed new working party on small shops and Sunday trading will include representatives of the National Chamber of Trade;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining the constitution and purpose of his proposed new working party on small shops and Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: No working party has been established but I propose to hold a meeting on 24 May with representatives of the Shopping Hours Reform Council at its request and of the Association of District Councils to seek a way forward on shopping hours reform. Representatives of the National Chamber of Trade will not be present.

National Stadium

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received concerning proposals to build a national stadium to improve the safety of sports spectators in the light of events at Hillsborough on 15 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: My Department has not received any representations about proposals to build a national studium. Responsibility for the safety and comfort of

spectators rests with the individual sports ground operator or event organiser, who must comply with the terms and conditions of any safety certificate in force for the ground in question.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire outlining the interviewing criteria and procedures to be used by West Yorkshire police in response to telephone calls and their investigations following the Hillsborough disaster on 15 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The interviewing critera and procedures are a matter for the investigating officers in consultation with Lord Justice Taylor. I understand that anyone who telephoned the police on the special telephone lines and who has relevant information will be interviewed by the investigating team.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire, as to on what basis and by whom the decision was taken to allow only one week for members of the public to contact West Yorkshire police, by special 'phone lines, after the Hillsborough disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The officer in charge of the police investigation team, in consultation with Lord Justice Taylor, decided to open the special telephone lines for three days initially. Owing to the heavy response on the first three days the lines were kept open for a further three days. The number of calls had lessened considerably by the sixth day and it was not thought necessary to keep the lines open any longer. The fact that the lines would close on the sixth day was widely publicised.

It remains open to anyone who believes that he or she has relevant information to contact the secretary to the inquiry at room 662, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire as to how many telephone calls have been received on the special telephone lines set up by West Yorkshire police, investigating events at Hillsborough on 15 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 2,666 calls were received on the special telephone lines during the six-day period.

Offences (Leicestershire)

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences there were in Leicestershire in 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) on the 13 April at column *713*.

Car Telephones

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* charged with and *(b)* convicted of road traffic offences connected with the use of mobile car telephones.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to proceedings at magistrates courts for all offences of careless driving and so on and is published annually in "Offences relating to motor vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary tables" (table 5 of the issue for 1987, the latest available). Information is not collected centrally about the circumstances of these alleged offences.

Risley

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently at Risley have ever been in-patients at a psychiatric hospital or clinic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Of the population on 5 May (322 male and 114 female prisoners) 37 male and 33 female prisoners have been in-patients at a psychiatric hosptial or clinic.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently at Risley were unable to give a permanent address when the order for their remand was made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Current information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A survey conducted in November 1988 indicated that 13 per cent. (40) of prisoners at Risley who had been remanded from Cheshire courts and 9 per cent. (46) of those from Lancashire courts had been remanded in custody because they had no permanent address or had an unsuitable address.

Gaelic Broadcasting

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement concerning the level and source of funding of a new Gaelic-speaking broadcasting authority;

(2) what agreement has been reached between his Department, S4C, Scottish television companies and other interested parties concerning the use of money currently paid by Scottish ITV companies to S4C, to fund Gaelic television programming.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Representations about the funding of Gaelic television programmes will be considered alongside the other comments which have been made in response to the Government's broadcasting White Paper.

Political Asylum

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of *(a)* the Soviet Union, *(b)* Hong Kong, *(c)* India, *(d)* Pakistan and *(e)* Bangladesh (i) the numbers of requests received annually since 1979 for political asylum from citizens of these countries and the number granted and (ii) the number of requests received annually since 1979 for residency from citizens of each of the countries and the number granted.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* Information on applications for, and on grants of refugee status in the United Kingdom in the years since 1979 to 1987, by nationality, is published in the annual Home Office statistical bulletins "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom" (tables 5A-5F of issue 12/86, table 6 of issue 13/87 and table 7 of issue 16/88), copies of which are in the Library. Information for 1988 will be published in the summer of 1989.

Information on applications in the Indian sub-continent in 1979-87 for an entry clearance for settlement, and in 1985-87 for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode, in the United Kingdom is given in tables 6, 9, 11 and 12 of "Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom, 1987" (Cm. 415). The corresponding figures for the other years, and information on applications in Hong Kong in 1985-88 for an entry clearance for settlement, are given in the following tables 1 and 2. Information for earlier years for Hong Kong and similar information for the Soviet Union is not readily available.

Information on the total number of persons granted settlement in the United Kingdom in the years 1979 to 1987, by nationality, is published in table 22 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1987" (Cm. 415). The number of persons accepted in 1988 for the nationalities requested is given in the following table 3.

Table 1

Applications[1] in Hong Kong and the Indian sub-continent for an entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Country	Applications Newly received[2]	Applications Granted[3,4]	Refused initially[4]
Hong Kong[5]:			
1985	680	750	40
1986	960	850	40
1987	710	590	30
1988	750	640	40
India:			
1988	4,090	3,630	1,100
Pakistan:			
1988	6,540	4,270	1,420
Bangladesh:			
1988	4,050	3,710	1,480

[1] By wives, children, persons for immediate settlement, husbands and fiance(e)s.
[2] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[3] Granted initially or on appeal.
[4] These applications may have been received in an earlier period.
[5] Including applications from Hong Kong stateless persons.

Table 2

Applications in the Indian sub-continent for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode[1] in the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Country	Applications Newly received[2]	Applications Granted[3,4]	Refused initially[4]
India			
1979	440	430	—
1980	420	420	—
1981	480	430	[5]
1982	520	480	[5]
1983	180	180	[5]
1984	160	150	[5]
1988	190	180	[5]
Pakistan			
1979	[5]	—	—
1980	[5]	[5]	—
1981	[5]	[5]	[5]
1982	[5]	[5]	—
1983	[5]	—	—
1984	[5]	[5]	—
1988	420	460	10
Bangladesh			
1979	20	10	10
1980	20	20	[5]
1981	20	20	—
1982	40	30	10
1983	50	20	30
1984	50	60	20
1988	2,600	2,150	390

[1] Including applications for a confirmation of the right of abode (prior to August 1988).
[2] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[3] Granted initially or an appeal.
[4] These applications may have been received in an earlier period.
[5] 5 or fewer.

Table 3

Acceptances for settlement in the United Kingdom by nationality: 1988

Nationality	Number of persons
Soviet Union	60
Hong Kong (British Dependent Territory Citizens)	1,150
India	5,020
Pakistan	4,280
Bangladesh	2,890

Assault and Battery

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions he has issued to police authorities on the recording in local crime statistics of offences committed under section 39 of the Ciminal Justice Act 1988.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* The compilation of local crime statistics is a matter for the chief constable. The information collected centrally relates to notifiable offences recorded by the police covering nearly all indictable offences and a few types of summary offence. (Full details are given in the appendices to "Criminal statistics, England and Wales", pp 180 and 184-8 of the issue for 1987, Cm. 498). The coverage of this series has not been changed since 1978, apart from its extension in 1983 to include offences of gross indecency with a child and offences of drug trafficking, currently together amounting to about 9,000 offences a year. The procedures for recording notifiable offences have also not been changed since 1980 when new counting rules were introduced to improve the consistency of recording multiple, continuous and repeated offences. Those offences made summary under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 continue to be covered, with the exception of offences of common assault made summary under section 39 of the Act. The police are being advised no longer to include offences of common assault in the count of notifiable offences reported to the Home Office, in order to avoid unduly complicating police recording practices for

summary offences of assault. The average number of such offences recorded by the police in the whole of England and Wales over the last 10 years has been around 600 a year so the reduction in the coverage of the series for notifiable offences recorded will be negligible (about 0·02 per cent.).

ENERGY

Nuclear Fusion

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make it his policy to ask the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to evaluate the feasibility of low temperature nuclear fusion, as discovered by Professor Fleischman of Southampton university and Professor Pons of the university of Utah in a joint experiment, announced in March 1989;

(2) what effort has been committed by officers in his Department to evaluate the claims by the British, American and Hungarian scientists in March and April 1989 to have produced energy from a cold fusion nuclear experiment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has already initiated experiments to reproduce and understand the effects which have been reported. It is too early to speculate on the outcome.

Plutonium and Nuclear Waste (Soviet Union)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, during his recent visit to the Soviet Union, he discussed with his Soviet counterpart *(a)* the possibility of the Soviet Union sending spent nuclear fuel to the United Kingdom for reprocessing at Sellafield, *(b)* the possibility of the United Kingdom exporting plutonium under safeguards to the Soviet Union for use in civil nuclear fuel rods, and *(c)* areas of mutual interest in the development of deep geological repositories for radioactive waste disposal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None of the topics were discussed at the meeting.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the statement made by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) *Official Report*, 13 April, column 1135, whether the reports on plutonium production sent by reactor operators to safeguard authorities on the despatch of spent irradiated fuel to reprocessing plants, give details of plutonium content to gramme quantities.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes.

Coal-fired Power Stations

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy on the future of coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The future of coal-fired stations in the mix of generating capacity will be a commercial matter for the privatised electricity industry.

EC (Meetings)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: Full Energy Councils were held in March, June and November of 1985 and 1986, and in June and November of 1987 and 1988. There were also three informal meetings of Community Energy Ministers during the period. Meetings of officials from member states have been held to prepare for the Councils. In addition, Councils of other Ministers have dealt with matters in which my Department has some concern and they also have been preceded by preparatory meetings of officials. The Commission has convened many meetings of Government experts on particular matters relevant to my Department's responsibilities and has also held relevant seminars, symposia etc. Finally, the European Parliament and its Committees and the Economic and Social Committee of the Community have considered relevant matters from time to time.

Preparation of a list of all such meetings could be achieved only at a disproportionate cost.

Nottinghamshire Mineworkers (Allocation Fund)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details on the amount of moneys paid by British Coal into the Nottinghamshire and district mineworkers allocation fund for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation.

DEFENCE

University Staff (Security Clearance)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether members of staff in universities and other institutions of higher education working on research contracts or agreements currently funded by his Department are required to have security clearance.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is a condition of contract that, before anyone is employed on an MOD contract which may give access to classified information, the prior agreement of MOD is sought.

Electromagnetic Radiation

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has funded any studies since 1979 in universities and polytechnics to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on human or animal life.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Territorial Army

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the rate of recruitment into the Territorial Army, showing which areas and which arms show the most and which the least progress in recruiting.

Mr. Neubert: Overall recruitment continues to show a satisfactory improvement with intakes during January and February showing increases, respectively, of 500 and 300 over that of August 1988. We continue to monitor the position most closely and to take stringent measures to build on this impetus including, of course, the Volunteer

Reserve Forces campaign. Although this campaign is aimed primarily at improving retention, we would expect to see some sort of spin-off in the area of recruitment. The generally improved position is largely reflected throughout all arms and all areas of the country.

Defence Budget

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the United Kingdom annual defence budget is spent in Wales; and what this is in cash terms in the last three years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Defence expenditure is not accounted for on a regional basis.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the research projects undertaken for his Department by the Natural Environment Research Council during the past five years.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence has currently three research agreements and 11 research contracts placed with the Natural Environment Research Council. Comparable information for the past five years is not readily available. It is not our policy to give details of these arrangements.

RAF Upper Heyford (Flight Path)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answers of 18 April to the hon. Member for Leyton, *Official Report*, columns *110-12*, whether it was his Department's decision to change the flight path used by F-111s taking off from RAF Upper Heyford so that these aircraft fly directly over local villages.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the Adjournment debate on 30 November 1988, *Official Report* columns 849-856.

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will *(a)* list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat, *(b)* list for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein and *(c)* express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* As at 1 April 1989, the total number of staff employed at the Ministry of Defence's non-nuclear research establishments was 13,640. This was broken down as follows:

	Number
Admiralty Research Establishment (Headquarters at Portsdown)	2,931
Aeroplane and Armaments Experimental Establishment (Boscombe Down)	1,101
Chemical Defence Establishment (Porton Down)	560
Royal Aerospace Establishment (Headquarters at Farnborough)	5,200
Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment (Headquarters at Fort Halstead)	2,262
Royal Signals and Radar Establishment (Headquarters at Malvern)	1,586

Staff are employed at a variety of sites throughout the United Kingdom. It is not our policy to provide a further breakdown of these figures.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any intention of establishing an interdisciplinary research centre in relation to ozone layer research at the Meteorological Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* No. Ozone layer research in the EC and EFTA countries is being co-ordinated from 1 April this year with the assistance of a special unit set up by the Department of the Environment and the European Commission. The Meteorological Office plays an important national and international advisory role through the expertise developed from work on atmospheric dynamics and chemistry. It has participated, with part funding from the Department of the Environment, in the large US-led 1987 Antarctic ozone experiment and in the similar 1989 experiment carried out in the Arctic; it is also collaborating with universities in this field.

EMPLOYMENT

Availability for Work

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions claimant advisers are given to help them assess the availability for work of those unemployed claimants whom they interview; and whether these instructions will be made available in the Library.

Mr. Lee: There are no discrete instructions to claimant advisers to help them assess availability for work. Claimant advisers work within the same framework of instructions used by all employment service staff.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: The information is available from the Library. In March 1989 unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,918,100, the lowest for more than eight years on a consistent basis. Unemployment has fallen for 32 months running, giving the longest and largest continuous fall since the second world war.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he can give details of the number of people in employment in Scotland and the United Kingdom in 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows. The figures are unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variation.

	Civilian work force in employment[1]	*Work force in employment*[2]
Scotland		
December 1978	2,231,000	[3]
December 1988	2,211,000	[3]
United Kingdom		
December 1978	24,998,000	25,315,000
December 1988	26,300,000	26,612,000

[1] The sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work related Government training programmes.
[2] The sum of the civilian work force in employment and Her Majesty's Forces. Estimates are not available for Scotland as consistent Her Majesty's Forces figures are not available below national level.
[3] Not available.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in the south-east.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian work force in employment in the south-east region was 9,014,000. This represents an increase of 1,012,000 or 13 per cent. since December 1983. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the level of employment in London.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian work force in employment in Greater London was 4,053,000. This represents an increase of 261,000 or 7 per cent. since December 1983. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies are currently registered with jobcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In March 1989 the number of unfilled vacancies, seasonally adjusted, at jobcentres was 222,900. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. The latest research shows that only about a third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

School Compacts

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the development of school compacts.

Mr. Cope: Most of the 30 applications for compact operational funding in England and Scotland have now been approved. I expect that all 30 will begin full operation this September. In addition, invitations have gone to the 24 urban programme areas in England that are not already covered by compacts to apply for funding for development work. I hope to be able to announce those areas awarded development funding during the summer.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are considering how best to take forward the further development of compacts.

I continue to be impressed, not just by the very positive response from both business and education to this initiative but also by the hard work which local partnerships have put into establishing compacts in their areas.

Tourism

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the growth of employment in the catering industry as a whole and the tourism sector in particular over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that, between December 1983 and December 1988, the number of employees in employment in the hotel and catering industry in Great Britain increased by 233,000. Further information from the labour force survey indicates that there was an increase of about 41,000 self-employed workers in the industry between spring 1983 and spring 1988. The estimated growth between December 1983 and December 1988 in the number of employees in employment in the sector of the hotel and catering industry directly related to tourism was 210,000. It is not possible to identify separately the growth in the number of self-employed workers in this sector.

Hendy and Miskin Quarries

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will order an immediate halt to any blasting operations at the Hendy and Miskin quarries in Taff Ely which are found to be endangering the health and property of local residents.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no such intentions. Any decision to halt blasting at the Hendy and Miskin quarries would be the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive's mines and quarries inspectorate which is keeping the situation under review.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what methods of assessment are being used by his Department to monitor the development of the technical and vocational education initiative in the 2,000 schools and colleges already involved; and if he will make a statement as to the progress and achievement which has been made by those who are proceeding beyond the pilot stage.

Mr. Cope: The technical and vocational education initiative has been extensively assessed both nationally and within each education authority. The national evaluation undertaken by a number of independent research institutions has included statistical databases and studies of management and education issues within the technical and vocational education initiative.

Significant progress has already been made by authorities beyond the pilot stage in ensuring that the curriculum is broad, balanced and more relevant to working life.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of staff employed in employment benefit fraud investigations for each year from 1979 to the latest available year.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's fraud investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

The number of fraud investigators employed by my Department each year since 1984 is as follows:

	Number
1984-85	450
1985-86	650
1986-87	720
1987-88	785
1988-89	820

In addition a number of other staff are engaged, on either a part-time or full-time basis, as support staff to these investigations.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total number of prosecutions for employment benefit fraud for each of the years from 1979 to the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department's fraud investigation work was reorganised in 1984 and comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

The number of prosecutions for benefit fraud for each year since 1984 is as follows:

	Number
1984-85	2,250
1985-86	2,800
1986-87	3,650
1987-88	3,960
1988-89	4,045

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the total amount of money lost through benefit fraud in 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: No reliable figure is available of the money lost through benefit fraud in 1988 because the full extent of the fraud that is occurring is not known.

As a result of investigations during 1988, however, the estimated net savings to public funds were £65 million.

European Social Fund

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the 1989 European social fund allocation was divided in *(a)* actual cash and *(b)* percentage terms between (i) central Government, (ii) local government, (iii) the voluntary sector and (iv) others; and what were the equivalent figures for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Details of the 1987 and 1988 allocations are as follows:

	1987 allocation		*1988 allocation*	
	£ million	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per cent.*
Central Government	323·5	74·3	263·5	63·4
Local Government	60·3	13·9	85·8	21·3
Volutary sector	16·5	3·8	23·0	5·8
Others	34·7	8·0	29·1	7·25

My Department is awaiting notification from the European Commision of the amounts allocated to individual schemes for 1989.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many European social fund projects submitted by the voluntary sector were given *(a)* full priority decisions, *(b)* part priority decisions, *(c)* no priority decisions and *(d)* not eligible decisions in 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The status given by the European Commission to projects submitted by the voluntary sector is as follows:

	1987	*1988*	*[1] 1989*
Full priority	251	372	232
Part priority including partly eligible	45	87	272
No priority	21	20	70
Not eligible	33	29	75
TOTAL	350	508	649

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many European social fund projects designed to train people in the skills required to establish new trading enterprises *(a)* received full priority and *(b)* received part priority in 1987, 1988 and 1989; and how many of these projects were devoted to training people to establish co-operatives.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* I regret that the information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria for cost per trainee were used in judging European social fund projects submitted by the voluntary sector in 1989; whether these criteria were published before the closing date for applications; and whether the criteria were based on those set out in any European Commission decision on management of the European social fund.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The Commission publishes no criteria on the costs per trainee which it uses for any category of European social fund projects.

Dock Workers (Wages)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the average wages of dockers in non-dock labour scheme ports.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Pay rates in ports outside the dock labour scheme are determined locally, as is the case for ports covered by the scheme. Average pay therefore varies between ports, both in and out of the scheme. Detailed average pay figures for the main ports outside the scheme could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

National Dock Labour Board

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the different welfare expenses of the National Dock Labour Board in 1987.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to page 17 of the board's annual report for 1987, which provides the following information on medical and welfare expenses over that year.

	£
Medical supplies and services	19,110
First aid training	74,937
Less: amount receivable from other users	(60,649)
Rehabilitation services	22,491
Sports activities	59,292
Dock workers clubs	50,135
Other welfare expenses	9,648
	174,964

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by what date he anticipates that all schools will be run on a local management basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend expects local management to be introduced progressively from April 1990. All secondary schools and all primary schools with 200 or more pupils in authorities outside inner London must receive delegated budgets by April 1993. For inner London boroughs, all qualifying schools must receive delegated budgets by April 1994.

Bromley Schools (Amalgamation)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the circumstances under which the London borough of Bromley was retrospectively permitted to change its section 12 notice for the amalgamation of an infant and junior school at Poverest, Orpington; and whether he will reconsider the decision to permit the amalgamation.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend approved, on 20 February 1989, section 12 proposals, published by the London borough of Bromley, to amalgamate Poverest infant and junior schools. Bromley subsequently wrote requesting a modification to the proposals relating to admissions. In accordance with section 12(9) of the Education Act 1980, my right hon. Friend approved the modification on 21 March 1989. While my right hon. Friend is empowered to modify the proposals at the request of the authority, he is not empowered to rescind his decision on the proposals. Bromley LEA is therefore under a duty to implement the proposals as approved with the modification.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to alter educational material distributed to schools concerning AIDS in the light of the evidence presented in the journal of the American Medical Association 1989, 261(2), pp. 244-5, that passionate kissing favours the transmission of HIV.

Mr. Butcher: On the basis of advice from the Department of Health, my right hon. Friend has no plans to alter the guidance currently given to schools concerning the risks of HIV infection from kissing.

Design

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of in-service training courses offered by his Department in design in each of the past five years, *(b)* the cost of each year's programme and *(c)* the number of teachers participating in such courses.

Mrs. Rumbold: The details requested are given in the table. The courses range in length from one to six days and involve not only school teachers but also lecturers and advisers. The courses are organised and run by Her Majesty's inspectorate with contributions from others knowledgeable in the field, including industrialists. The costs stated include the charges made by the venues for facilities, the fees and subsistence of speakers and the cost of materials and all tuition.

The courses are often heavily over-subscribed and attract applications from Europe as well as the United Kingdom.

Year	*Number of Courses*	*Number of participants*	*Cost (£)*
1984	10	746	21,629
1985	5	477	13,160
1986	7	591	16,796
1987	7	650	22,465
1988	12	1,113	29,864

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* teacher training colleges offering courses in design and *(b)* student teacher's training design courses in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Twenty-five institutions in England and Wales offer secondary phase initial teacher training courses in craft, design and technology. Design may also form a significant part in the subject studies element in primary phase courses and secondary phase courses in art and in art and design. The table shows the number of students recruited to secondary phase courses in craft, design and technology in each of the last five years:

Year	*Number*
1984	487
1985	452
1986	551
1987	754
1988	783

Source: DES annual survey of recruitment to initial teacher training.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have advisers or inspectors who specialise in design.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not collected centrally.

Teachers

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford of 15 March, *Official Report*, columns *221-22*, if he will describe how, in 1987, his Department determined the numbers of rate B, rate D and rate E incentive allowances which would be awarded automatically as at 30 September 1987; whether the information used in making such determinations was up to date; what information subsequently became available to his Department regarding the actual numbers of teachers either on the basis of entitlement to such automatic awards or on the basis of payment of such awards; whether the numbers of actual payments exceeded the original expectations of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* Circular 8/87 assumed that 129,000 teachers in ordinary schools would be awarded an incentive allowance in October 1987, of whom 104,000 would receive a B, D or E allowance automatically as a result of being on scale 3, scale 4 or the senior teacher scale on 30 September 1987. These numbers were based on the distribution of teachers across the pay scales at March 1985 as shown on the database of teacher records. Results from the DTR are currently emerging about two years in arrears because of delays in the supply of information to the Department. The Department projected these 1985 DTR data forward to September 1987 on the basis of assumptions about wastage, recruitment and the movement of teachers on the pay scales.

DTR data for March 1987 will be available shortly. Early indications are that the numbers of teachers on scale 3, scale 4 or the senior teacher scale in March 1987 were slightly higher than had been projected at the time the system of incentive allowances was being introduced. Information about the numbers of teachers who actually received an incentive allowance in October 1987 will become available in due course from the 1988 DTR.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford of 15 March, *Official Report*, columns *221-22*, what was the total cost to employers of school teachers' incentive allowances in financial year 1987-88 *(a)* on the basis of his Department's plans before October 1987 and *(b)* on the basis of outturn figures; what amount and proportion, for each case *(a)* and *(b)* above, relates to allowances awarded automatically on 30 September 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* The estimated cost of incentive allowances awarded to teachers in ordinary schools in the financial year 1987-88 was £113 million, of which approximately £106 million (94 per cent.) was in respect of allowances awarded automatically on 1 October 1987. Outturn figures for the cost of incentive allowances cannot be disaggregated from the total cost of teachers' pay.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Queen's Counsel

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General what qualities and abilities are fundamental to the appointment of an individual as a Queen's counsel; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor recommends the grant of silk only to barristers of sufficient standing who he is satisfied have reached an appropriate level of professional eminence and distinction.

Category A Prisoners (Trials)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what is his practice with respect to ordering the trials of category A prisoners to be held at the most cost-effective location; and under what powers he acts in such circumstances.

The Attorney-General: Should the prosecution or defence wish the place of trial to be other than that directed by the justices under section 7 of the Magistrates Courts Act 1980, application may be made to the Crown court under s.76 of the Supreme Court Act 1981, the application being heard by a judge of the High Court in open court, who may comply with or refuse the application, or give a direction not in compliance with it as the court thinks fit. Classification and allocation to judges of cases triable in the Crown court and place of trial generally are governed by a practice direction issued by the Lord Chief Justice with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor on 2 November 1987 pursuant to section 75 of the 1981 Act.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House of Fraser

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column 310, what aspect of the public interest persuaded him not to refer the House of Fraser inspector's report to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend's decision was reached after taking into account all relevant considerations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made by the serious fraud squad in its inquiries with the House of Fraser report; when he expects it to complete its inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I cannot say.

Business Development Consultancy

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications were *(a)* received, and *(b)* approved for business development consultancy initiatives from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989; and what was the total amount of expenditure involved, for each of the regions of his Department, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Forth: In the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, 19,691 applications were received for the business

development consultancy initiatives. In the same period 14,221 applications were approved for assisted consultancy. The Department's contribution to the cost of completed consultancies totalled £14·3 million. It is estimated that those consultancies not completed by 31 March 1989 will cost the Department £20·9 million. A breakdown of numbers and cost of consultancy projects for each DTI region and for Scotland and Wales is as follows:

DTI Region/Country	*(a) Number of applications received*	*(b) Number of applications approved for assisted consultancy*	*(c) DTI Expenditure on completed consultancies (£'000)*	*(d) Estimated expenditure on outstanding consultancies (£'000)*
North East	1,003	751	686	980
North West	2,954	2,401	2,744	3,643
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,917	1,359	1,601	1,910
West Midlands	2,102	1,456	1,558	2,740
East Midlands	1,173	916	943	1,447
South West	1,933	1,141	886	1,711
South East:				
Cambridge	1,439	915	643	1,229
London	2,199	1,504	1,415	1,817
Reading	1,136	871	672	1,115
Reigate	1,116	820	658	1,066
Scotland	1,529	1,235	1,644	2,076
Wales	1,190	852	843	1,200
Total	19,691	14,221	14,293	20,934

Electrical Goods

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current import penetration of the market for household electrical goods.

Mr. Alan Clark: Taking the coverage of "household electrical goods" to be the same as that of Business Monitor PQ 3460—"Domestic electrical appliances"—it is estimated that in 1988 the import penetration of the market for household electrical goods was 40 per cent.

Single European Market

Mr. Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a further statement on his Department's objectives for the completion of the single European market; and on what steps he is taking to ensure the attainment of those objectives.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* We strongly support progress to complete the single European market. Areas to which we attach particular priority include the liberalisation of financial services: public purchasing, transport and telecommunications services, and the removal of technical barriers to trade. In the Council of Ministers, we will continue to press for these objectives to be achieved in ways which open markets without placing unnecessary burdens on business, and which ensure that the Community remains open to the outside world.

The Government are also determined that United Kingdom industry should be as well placed as possible to meet the challenges the single market will bring. Our "Europe—Open for Business" campaign is designed to ensure that businesses are fully aware of the changes and to encourage them to take action to adapt their strategies accordingly.

Productivity (Steel and Coal)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to increases in productivity in *(a)* the steel industry and *(b)* the coal industry since 1979.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The official data series on productivity was published by the Department of Employment in the *Employment Gazette* but these do not include separately identifiable figures for the steel industry and the coal industry. The following data from the annual census of production provide the required information for the iron and steel industry and for coal extraction and the manufacture of solid fuels for the period to 1987, the most recent year for which figures are available.

Iron and steel industry[1]

Year	*Production (gross value added) (1985 prices)* £ billion	*Employment* thousands	*Productivity (gross value added per head) (1985 prices)* £ thousands
1979	1·4	184·8	7·3
1980	0·9	145·0	6·4
1981	1·2	111·9	10·6
1982	0·9	92·9	9·6
1983	1·2	78·6	15·8
1984	1·3	69·7	18·1
1985	1·4	67·3	20·3
1986	1·4	64·0	21·9
1987	1·7	56·0	30·6

[1] The iron and steel industry comprises group 221 of the Standard Industrial Classification (revised 1980) and covers the iron and steel industry as defined by the European Coal and Steel Community in the treaty of Paris, 1951.

Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels[2]

Year	*Production (gross value added) (1985 prices)* £ billion	*Employment* thousands	*Productivity (gross value added per head) (1985 prices)* £ thousands
1979	3·9	282·9	13·9
1980	4·1	280·5	14·6
1981	4·0	268·2	14·8
1982	3·7	256·5	14·6
1983	3·3	236·3	13·9
1984	0·9	217·3	4·2
1985	2·6	172·4	15·1
1986	2·3	157·6	14·7
1987	1·9	130·6	14·9

[2] Coal extraction and manufacture of solid fuels comprises group 111 of the Standard Industrial Classification (revised 1980).
Source: Annual Census of Production.

Car Industry

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the numbers of cars manufactured per employee in the United Kingdom, other European countries and Japanese car plants in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The information is not available.

Child Labour (Third World)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to name those high street stores which currently sell goods whose manufacturing process has involved the use of child labour in countries of the Third world; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The issue of child labour is a distressing phenomenon of Third world commerce but one of long standing. The complexity of the problem makes indirect action of the kind the hon. Member suggests both impractical and quite possibly unjust.

THE ARTS

Northern Ballet Theatre

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many representations have been received *(a)* by his Office and *(b)* by the Arts Council on the subject of the future of the Northern Ballet theatre.

Mr. Luce: I have received more than 100 letters from hon. and right hon. Members, and a similar number from members of the public. The Arts Council has received more than 12,000 letters and postcards.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has ever sought permission from the appropriate authorities in *(a)* the Republic of South Africa and *(b)* Namibia, to change the safeguards and use of coding on uranium from those countries, from N to P.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have been asked to reply.
No.

Chile

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chilean Government regarding their announced reduction in the number of representatives to be elected for the Chilean Parliament in the general elections in those constituencies with an opposition majority.

Mr. Eggar: None. There have so far been no official proposals regarding the electoral law, or electoral boundaries and districts.

West Germany

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the West German Foreign Minister; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met Herr Genscher on 14 and 15 April at an informal weekend meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers in Granada, where a range of European Community and other international issues were discussed.

Narcotics

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what international measures are in force to interdict supplies of chemical materials necessary for the manufacture of narcotics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances contains provisions designed to prevent diversion of substances for illicit drugs manufacture. A total of 64 countries, including the United Kingdom, have signed the convention. We intend to ratify it as soon as Parliament approves enabling legislation.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of Austria, West Germany, Holland and Turkey regarding drug trafficking through those countries into western Europe.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions on drugs with all four countries take place periodically within the Council of Europe Pompidou group. A ministerial meeting of this group will be held in London next week. In addition, we are discussing with the Federal Republic of Germany the possibility of a bilateral asset seizure agreement, and bilateral talks with the Dutch on a similar agreement are planned for later this month.

Visas

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications from Polish residents to visit relations in the United Kingdom remain outstanding at the latest available date.

Mr. Eggar: It is not possible to determine how many of the 1,991 short-term visit applications currently—28 April—under consideration at the British embassy, Warsaw originate from Polish nationals seeking to visit relations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy for granting visas to Argentine nationals; how long applications take to be considered; and how many applications have been turned down in each of the last three years.

Mr. Eggar: Visas are normally granted to Argentine nationals, other than serving military officers, who can satisfy an entry clearance officer that they meet the requirements of the immigration rules. Straightforward applications lodged with the British interests section of the Swiss embassy in Buenos Aires are processed within three days. Figures for refusals are readily available only for visa applications lodged in Buenos Aires. These are:

1986 — five
1987 — three
1988 — two

"Britain's Voice in South Africa"

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost to public funds of publishing the pamphlet "Britain's Voice in South Africa".

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 2 May.

Syria

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government in conjunction with their EEC partners are pressing to obtain Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have consistently called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, in order that the country's national unity, integrity, full sovereignty and independence may be restored.

Middle East

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to take any action *(a)* unilaterally, and *(b)* with his European colleagues, to halt the escalation of arms sales to the middle east in order to reduce the possibility of arms falling into unauthorised hands.

Mr. Waldegrave: All exports of British defence-related equipment are considered on a strict case-by-case basis taking account of the United Kingdom's political, strategic and security interests. Each transaction is subject to stringent export licensing procedures, including where appropriate an end-user undertaking and a no transfer clause.

These strict procedures are applied uniformly to all defence equipment exports worldwide, including the middle east. In addition, special restrictions are applied to exports to certain middle eastern countries, reflecting our wish not to fuel or prolong conflicts in the region, and our determination to take a firm line on state-sponsored terrorism.

We believe that restraint can be brought about only by wider international agreement on ways to control the escalation of arms sales and to reduce tension. In that spirit we co-sponsored a resolution adopted in the UN first committee in November 1988 calling inter alia for reinforcement of national systems of control.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he would expect a Vietnamese refugee arriving in Hong Kong today to have completed the screening procedure at the present rate of disposal; how much longer he would expect the appeal procedure to take if screened out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: At the present rate of screening, Vietnamese boat people arriving in Hong Kong today would have to wait for about four and a half years before they could be screened. Those screened out who appeal against the decision could expect to wait another year before the appeal is determined. The Hong Kong Government are aware that the present screening and appeal procedures take too long to complete: these procedures are under urgent review.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the nationality status of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong; what provision is made under the British Nationality Act concerning the status of children born to refugees residing in the territory of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The nationality of Vietnamese refugees and boat people in Hong Kong will be governed by the nationality laws of Vietnam, or of any other state whose nationality they might claim.

Persons born in Hong Kong before 1 January 1983, including those born to Vietnamese refugees, were born "British subjects: citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies" under the British Nationality Act 1948. On 1 January 1983, such persons became British Dependent Territories Citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981, which came into force on that date. After that date, persons born to Vietnamese refugees or boat people in Hong Kong do not have British nationality by virtue of their birth there.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is given to Vietnamese refugees during the screening procedure in Hong Kong, including advice as to legal representation; whether such refugees are entitled to legal representation during the procedure; if he will place in the Library copies of the forms of all notices and documents served upon such refugees; what proportion of the refugees is represented by lawyers during the screening procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Asylum seekers are informed of the nature and purpose of the screening procedure before the screening interview. Those asylum seekers who, after the screening interview, are refused refugee status are informed in writing of their right of appeal, how to lodge an appeal, and the availability of legal assistance from the UNHCR in preparing their statements of appeal. Notices and documents served to asylum seekers will be obained from the Hong Kong authorities and placed in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any proposals to extend to Hong Kong the treaty obligations applicable to the United Kingdom as a result of United Kingdom ratification of the United Nations convention on refugees (1951) and the protocol (1967); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The procedures currently being used in Hong Kong to determine whether newly arrived boat people meet the criteria for refugee status are fully in accordance with the terms of the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol.

EC (Meetings)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Council met on three occasions in both 1985 and 1988 and twice in both 1986 and 1987. The Foreign Affairs Council met on 13 occasions in 1985, 11 in 1986 and 1987 and 12 in 1988; there were also occasional informal meetings of Foreign Ministers. In addition, there were numerous meetings of officials. Information on the number of such meetings could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Embassies (Commercial Departments)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many full-time Foreign Office personnel are employed in the commercial department of British embassies in *(a)* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, *(b)* China, *(c)* Japan, *(d)* France and *(e)* West Germany.

Mrs. Chalker: The total numbers of staff working in the commercial sections of our overseas posts (embassies and consulates general) by country are:

	United Kingdom based	*Locally engaged*
USSR	9	5
China	19	9
Japan	12	31
France	12	27
West Germany	18	54

This includes the heads of each post and other staff who have more than just commercial work responsibilities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Road Junction Safety

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what road markings exist at the junction of the Buchill Park avenue with Buchill road; whether the sight lines at this junction comply with present road design standards; when the hedges at this junction were last cut back; when a footway will be provided at this location; and what other proposals he has to improve this road junction.

Mr. Needham: I believe that the right hon. Gentleman's question refers to Beechill Park avenue and Beechill road.

As is customary with junctions of this type, road markings do not exist at the junction of Beechill Park avenue Beechill road. The sight line to the left at this junction complies with the normal standard, the sight line to the right does not. The roads service has no record of when the hedges at this junction were last cut back but can confirm that they are regularly faced by the owner. At the present time they do not overhang the road.

There are no plans to provide a footway or to carry out any improvements at this location.

Anglo-Irish Secretariat

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total costs incurred by the siting of the Anglo-Irish secretariat at Maryfield; of this sum how much relates to wages and salaries of the staff involved, how much to security measures taken; how the rest of the sum was expended, and how much of the total under each heading was borne by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tom King: The Secretariat is operated on a basis of shared costs for shared facilities, the Irish Government contributing to the operating expenses in varying proportions, reflecting the use made of each facility. The costs to the Irish Government of their staff, transport etc. is a matter for them. Salaries and wages for the British staff over the total period from the start in December 1985 to 30 April 1989 amounted to £401,000. Security costs fall exclusively to the British Government. Manpower costs for security were £1,666,000. Other costs, totalling three-quarters of a million pounds, comprised alterations to the building and site, and operating expenses.

Processions and Marches

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any representations have been made to him by the Government of the Irish Republic about any processions or marches which *(a)* have taken place, or *(b)* were banned by him in Northern Ireland in each year since 1984, or *(c)* about any scheduled to take place in the current year.

Mr. Tom King: The Irish Government have made representations from time to time about particular marches and processions in Northern Ireland, the details of which are confidential. These representations, like any others, are passed on to the Chief Constable of the RUC who has operational responsibility for this matter. Any decision by me to ban or reroute a march or procession would be made on the basis of his recommendation.

Social Fund

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration has been given to the respective numbers of premium recipients at each social security office in determining the 1989-90 social fund budget.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The characteristics of the income support caseload of each social security office were taken into account in determining its social fund budget for 1989-90—that is, the number of pensioners, people with disability premiums, unemployed and others. Details of the basis of the calculations were placed in the Library on 23 March.

Income Support

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated number of 16 and 17-year-olds who since the September 1988 changes to general income support entitlement have continued to be entitled to income support in their own right.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The information requested is not available.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated number of school leavers affected by the September 1988 changes removing general income support entitlement and guaranteeing a YTS place and training allowance.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* The only available information about summer school leavers affected is the number who were receiving extended child benefit. The highest figure between September and December 1988 was 621.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Marginal Tax Rates

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the numbers of lower-paid families with and without children whose marginal tax rates including benefit withdrawal will be *(a)* 90 to 100 per cent., *(b)* 80 to 90 per cent., *(c)* 70 to 80 per cent., *(d)* 60 to 70 per cent., *(e)* 50 to 60 per cent. and *(f)* 40 to 50 per cent., taking into account the tax changes for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information requested is as follows:

Combined marginal income tax and benefit withdrawal rates 1989-90
Working heads of tax units (000) Great Britain numbers facing combined rates of over 40 per cent.—in bands

	Families with children	*Couples and single people*	*Total*
100 per cent. and over	—	—	—
90 per cent. to 99 per cent.	40	5	45
80 per cent. to 89 per cent.	155	10	165
70 per cent. to 79 per cent.	170	35	205
60 per cent. to 69 per cent.	[1]	5	5
50 per cent. to 59 per cent.	[1]	5	5
40 per cent. to 49 per cent.	10	25	35

Notes:

(i) Marginal deduction rates shown are for heads of tax units in receipt of Family Credit/Housing benefit where at least one partner works 24 hours or more a week.

(ii) All estimates are for 1989-90 and are based on combined 1985 and 1986 Family Expenditure Survey data and are consistent with this year's Government Expenditure White Paper.

(iii) [1] denotes an estimate of fewer than 2,500.

(iv) The total number of working heads of tax units with more than 24 weekly remunerative hours is approximately 17 million. Those shown in the table therefore represent under 3 per cent. of the total.

Family Credit (Wales)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the cause of the low rate of claims for family credit in Wales; and what statistics he has collected on this matter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An assessment of the reasons why people failed to claim family credit can be found in "Family Credit: The Strategic Development of the Spring 1989 Publicity Campaign: Research Summary" which has been placed in the Library by the Central Office of Information.

Separate estimates of the eligible population, or the level of take up, are not available for Wales. At the beginning of April 1989 around 17,000 families in Wales were actually receiving family credit, but this does not include those who were still awaiting a decision on a claim and eventually received payment covering that date.

Appeals

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average total cost to his Department of the administrative procedures which occur between a refusal of benefit by an adjudication officer and the implementation of a decision by the Social Security appeal tribunal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A typical case where, for example, income support is refused by an adjudication officer and subsequently allowed by the Social Security appeal tribunal, will incur local office administrative costs of about £90. This figure excludes administrative costs incurred by the office of the president of Social Security appeal tribunals which are the responsibility of the President, His Honour Judge Byrt QC. The hon. Member may care to contact him direct for these details.

EC (Meetings)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Fraud

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of staff employed in his Department's benefit fraud investigations for each year from 1979 to the latest available year;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total number of prosecutions for social security benefit fraud for each of the years from 1979 to the most recent year for which figures are available;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* an estimate of the total amount of money lost through benefit fraud in 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Precise figures are not available, but it is possible to estimate the numbers of full-time equivalent posts on the basis of records of staff time expended on fraud-related work. The numbers of full-time equivalent posts each year since 1979 have been as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979-80	2,311
1980-81	2,336
1981-82	2,346
1982-83	2,185
1983-84	2,211
1984-85	2,204
1985-86	2,285
1986-87	2,390
1987-88	2,724
1988-89	2,940

Additional information requested is contained in my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 31 January at column *192*.

Disability Provision (Employment Training)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether a person who is in receipt of disability provision would lose their entitlement on completion of an employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: Subject to satisfaction of the relevant eligibility criteria, attendance allowance, mobility allowance and the disability premium with income support can be paid during and after a period of employment training. Trainees who were receiving sickness benefit, invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance immediately before employment training can have their benefit reinstated as a linked claim if they are incapable of work and make the fresh claim within eight weeks of the end of training.

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his statement on 24 April, *Official Report*, column 725, that £9 of every £10 of means-tested benefit reaches those to whom it is intended, he will list the total sum in public expenditure allocated to each of the main means-tested benefits administered by his Department; and if he will also list the sums paid out to claimants in the last relevant financial year.

Mr. Scott: The total sums allocated to each of the main income-related benefits for forward years and the latest estimates of the sums paid out to claimants in repect of these benefits in 1988-89, the last relevant financial year, are set out in table 15·1 of Cm 615.

Living Standards

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library his calculations showing that the living standards of lone parents have risen by 10 per cent., couples with children by 9 per cent. and couples without children and single people by 6 per cent. over the period 1979 to 1985, as cited by him on 24 April, *Official Report*, column 725.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The figures refer to the incomes of households in the non-pensioner population. They are based on the total net incomes of individuals in households derived from all sources less income tax and national insurance. Incomes were adjusted for the differing sizes and compositions of households in order to make direct comparisions between the improvements in living standards of people with and without children. The esimates are based on the family expenditure survey and cover Great Britain as a whole.

Social Fund

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much the Aberdare Department of Social Security offices were given for the social fund *(a)* in 1988-89 and *(b)* in 1989-90; whether this has increased in line with inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The details of the social fund allocations are as follows:

	Loans £	*Grants* £
1988-89	275,645	117,197
1989-90	281,323	123,789

A note explaining the basis on which the social fund allocations for 1989-90 were calculated is in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of how many pensioners have *(a)* an occupational pension, *(b)* investment income and *(c)* both; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* In 1986 approximately 3·4 million (50 per cent.) pensioner tax units had an occupational pension, 4·7 million (70 per cent.) had investment income, and 2·8 million (40 per cent.) had both.

Note: A pensioner tax unit is a single person of state pension age or over, or a couple where the man is of state pension age or over.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax (Dental Inputs)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount of value added tax paid on dental inputs by general dental practitioners in England and Wales during the last three financial years.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that this information is not available.

Football Pools

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will earmark annually £100 million of the sum paid to

the Government in tax on football pools to a fund for the purpose of bringing about all-seater stadia at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Lilley: In line with an established principle of the tax system, followed by successive Governments, and in the interests of efficient management of public expenditure, receipts from taxation are not hypothecated for particular purposes.

Child Benefit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the savings would be of taxing child benefit for taxpayers at the 40 per cent. tax rate in 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue yield in 1989-90 from taxing child benefit at 40 per cent. for those married couples and single parents facing a marginal tax rate of 40 per cent. for that year is estimated to be about £140 million.

Reply Paid Envelopes

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when it was decided that those required to supply information to the commissioners of Inland Revenue using OHMS envelopes must affix postage stamps; when the use of reply paid envelopes was discontinued; and what publicity was given to this change.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 29 January 1988 at column *420* and to the Inland Revenue press release of that date.

Allowances and Reliefs

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the savings in a full year at 1989-90 rates of restricting all allowances and reliefs to the standard rate of tax; and if he will provide a breakdown by category of allowance and relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* Estimates of the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1989-90 levels of income from restricting the main income tax reliefs and allowances to the basic rate are as follows:

	£ million
(a) Personal allowances	1,320
(b) Mortgage interest relief	430
(c) Employees' superannuation and personal pension contributions	200
(d) Retirement annuity relief[1]	100

[1] Including relief for retirement annuity payments made by employees.

It is not possible to provide reliable estimates for the effects of restricting other smaller reliefs to the basic rate.

The direct revenue yield from restricting all reliefs and allowances simultaneously to the basic rate is likely to be in the order of £2½ billion, somewhat more than the sum of the yields from restricting the reliefs and allowances separately; this is due to the cumulative effect of bringing more people into higher rate tax. About two thirds of those who would pay more tax as a result of this change are currently liable only at the basic rate. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal income and are provisional. No account is taken of possible behavioural changes or the effect on receipts of capital gains tax.

Housing (Tax Exemption)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when tax-free employer grants to employees moving to higher cost housing areas were introduced; what the largest allowable size of grant to qualify for tax exemption was in each tax year of operation; and if he will provide an estimate of the number of such tax-free grants made.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Subject to certain conditions, payments of this kind have never been regarded as taxable. To be tax-free payments must be spread over a number of years and not exceed, in total, a prescribed amount. Since 1 April 1987, the maximum amount payable tax-free has varied in line with the maximum amount payable under the Civil Service additional housing costs allowance. The relevant amounts are given in the table. I regret that estimates of the number of tax-exempt payments is not available.

Moves on or after:	*Total payable tax-free* £
1 April 1987	18,270
1 June 1987	17,220
30 March 1988	15,750
1 October 1988	20,160
1 February 1989	21,210

Personal Borrowing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the level of personal sector bank borrowings, gross and net, in each year since 1983 in current and standard prices;

(2) what was the personal sector consumer credit outstanding in each year since 1983 in current and standard prices.

Mr. Lilley: Figures for personal sector consumer credit outstanding and bank borrowing in current prices are available in *Financial Statistics* (tables 9.3 and 14.4). Figures for such debt measured in standard (ie. constant) prices are not published, and there is no unique, correct method of calculating them. But *Economic Trends* includes a number of price indices which could be combined with the current price data to provide estimates.

Separate Taxation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that when husbands and wives are taxed separately there will be no adverse effect on elderly married pensioners caused by the abolition of the married personal allowance where the wife's only taxable income is her state retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No elderly married couple will be worse off as a result of the changes to allowances when independent taxation of husbands and wives is introduced in April 1990. The allowances available to an elderly husband under the new system—the personal allowance

and the married couple's allowance—will be at least as great as the married age allowance which he is receiving at present, and the elderly wife will for the first time be entitled to an age-related personal allowance in her own right which she will be able to set against any of her income, from whatever source. In fact, over 85 per cent. of taxpaying elderly couples will pay less tax under independent taxation.

Profit Sharing (Luton)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those companies in the Luton area which made a profit-sharing payment to their employees in 1988-89, showing in each case when the last such payment was made.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As information provided to the Inland Revenue about payments made by particular employers to their employees, whether under profit-related pay schemes or otherwise, is confidential, I regret I cannot publish the details requested.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to abolish the tax allowance for married couples and replace this with two single persons' allowances.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Under independent taxation, which begins in April 1990, both husband and wife will get their own personal allowance. The new system will continue to recognise marriage through the married couple's allowance, which will be given in the first instance to the husband. The personal allowance and the married couple's allowance will together be equivalent to the present married man's allowance.

Payroll Giving

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage and number of *(a)* basic rate taxpayers and *(b)* higher rate taxpayers participating in charity payroll giving in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that over 120,000 people were participating in the scheme at the end of 1988-89, but I regret that information on their marginal rate of tax is not available.

Tax Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax was remitted or written-off as irrecoverable in 1979 and 1987; and what was *(a)* the amount written-off and *(b)* the number of taxpayers for whom the ground for non-payment was (i) that they had gone abroad, (ii) that they were untraceable, (iii) insolvency and (iv) hardship.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The total amounts of tax remitted or written off as irrecoverable in 1979 and 1987 were:

	£ thousand
1979	60,310
1987	333,294

The amounts written off and number of taxpayers involved, where the grounds were (i) gone abroad, (ii) untraceable, (iii) insolvency and (iv) hardship were:

	£ thousand	*Taxpayers*
1979		
(i) Gone abroad	4,631	2,491
(ii) Untraceable	14,179	23,680
(iii) Insolvency	32,564	23,032
(iv) Hardship	1,108	7,988
1987		
(i) Gone abroad	9,683	2,678
(ii) Untraceable	51,448	41,067
(iii) Insolvency	241,290	68,868
(iv) Hardship	1,896	6,907

Taxable Income

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), 4 April, *Official Report*, columns *9-10*, he will express the figures given of taxable income as a per capita and per taxpayer figure, and if in each case he will also express the county figures in rank order in an index form taking the national average to be 100.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 April 1989]*: I regret that the sample size of the survey of personal incomes is not large enough to provide reliable comparisons amongst individual counties of income per head. The table therefore shows a regional analysis.

Total Income[1] liable to tax 1986-87

	Per taxpayer[2]		*per head of population at mid-1986*	
Region	*£*	*UK=100*	*£*	*UK=100*
North	11,000	95	3,800	92
Yorkshire and Humberside	11,300	98	3,700	91
North West	11,200	97	3,800	93
East Midlands	11,000	95	3,800	92
West Midlands	10,900	94	3,900	94
East Anglia	11,400	98	3,900	94
South East	12,600	109	4,800	116
South West	11,200	97	4,000	99
Wales	10,400	90	3,200	78
Scotland	10,800	94	3,600	88
Northern Ireland	10,700	93	2,900	71
United Kingdom	11,500	100	4,100	100

[1] Income liable to tax before deductions and personal allowances. The previous reply was in terms of taxable income—that is income liable to tax after deductions and allowances.

[2] Counting only those taxpayers whose incomes are large enough for them to be liable to tax.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current estimated income cost of the rebasing of capital gains tax to 1982 enacted in the Finance Act 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 April 1989]*: Updated estimates of the effect on receipts in 1989-90 are reductions of £55 million for capital gains tax and £250 million for corporation tax.

Premium Bonds

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what public consultations were carried out by the director of savings prior to his decision to increase the minimum purchase of premium bonds from £10 to £100 and to abolish premium bond gift tokens;

(2) what consultations he carried out regarding *(a)* the increase in the minimum purchase of premium bonds from £10 to £100 and *(b)* the abolition of the premium bond gift tokens.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* These decisions were taken by Treasury Ministers in the usual way. They keep the terms of all National Savings products under constant review, and make changes whenever they consider them necessary. Minimum purchases of £10 may still be made by parents, grandparents and guardians on behalf of children under 16.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will instruct the director of savings to defer to 1 January 1990 the increase in the minimum purchase of premium bonds from £10 to £100 and the abolition of premium bond gift tokens.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* No.

Company Pension Funds

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the value of company pension fund contribution holidays in the United Kingdom in each of the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Full information in the form requested is not available. Information from large self-administered pension schemes proposing contribution holidays to reduce surpluses following the legislation in the Finance Act 1986 is as follows:

Schemes proposing a contribution holiday

	Number	*Amount (£ million)*
Schemes reporting in 1987-88	67	58
Schemes reporting between April 1988 and January 1989	157	236

Note:
The figures represent the total amount of surplus to be eliminated by means of a contribution holiday by schemes which have reported in each period. The contribution holiday may be spread across several years. Schemes proposing a reduction in contributions rather than a contribution holiday are not included in the above.

Electoral Register

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Inland Revenue makes use of the information from electoral registers for taxation purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* When appropriate the Inland Revenue uses the electoral register and other publicly available information in its efforts to ensure that everyone pays the right tax.

European Monetary System

Mr. Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the advantages which would accrue to British industry by virtue of United Kingdom membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the speech which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made to the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham house on 25 January and to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) on 20 January 1989 at column *358*.

Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate for net disposal income after mortgage payments in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The most recently available figures are for 1986: these were given in my reply to my hon. Friend on 1 March 1988 at column *503*. It is expected that the estimates for 1987 will be available in July.

Standard of Living

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate of the increase in the standard of living of *(a)* a single man and *(b)* a married man with two children and a wife who is not in paid employment on (i) half average earnings, (ii) three-quarters average earnings, (iii) average earnings and (iv) one and a half times average earnings since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Latest estimates for increases in real take-home pay between 1978-79 and 1989-90 are given in the table.

Percentage increase in real take home pay 1978-79 to 1989-90[1]

	Multiples of average male earnings[2]			
	½	¾	*1*	*1½*
Single person	31	34	36	40
Married man with wife not in paid employment and 2 children[3]	24	28	31	36

[1] Financial year average of pre- and post-October regimes for employees' National Insurance Contributions, using illustrative growth rates between 1988-89 and 1989-90 of 7½ per cent. in average earnings and 6 per cent. in prices.
[2] Full time males on adult rates (all occupations).
[3] Children assumed to be under 11, and child benefit included in figures to allow comparison with 1978-79 when child tax allowances were still being phased out.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 May, if he will express the value of North sea oil and gas revenues in fiscal years 1979-80 to 1988-89 in current prices.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The value of North sea oil and gas revenues given in the answer of 2 May was expressed in current prices. More detailed information on North sea oil and gas revenues is published by the Department of Energy in the annual Brown Book.

National Insurance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the distribution of the benefit of the proposed national insurance contribution changes amongst employees ranked into deciles of earnings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The Government Actuary's Department estimate that for 1990-91, the first full year for which the new contribution rates will apply, the decile of employees with the lowest earnings will gain £80 million. The second lowest decile will gain £120 million. The remaining eight deciles will each gain £325 million; a total gain for all employees of £2·8 billion.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister how many parliamentary questions in the past 12 months have received the answer that the requested information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware three questions addressed to me within the past 12 months have fallen into the disproportionate cost category.

Works of Art

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish a table showing the works of art, objects or artefacts currently on loan from public galleries and museums at *(a)* Lancaster house, *(b)* Dorney Wood, *(c)* the Chevening estate and *(d)* Chequers.

The Prime Minister: The furnishings and other contents of Lancaster house are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment, and of the houses at Dorney Wood, Chevening and Chequers of the relevant trust bodies.

Single European Act

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 2 May, *Official Report* column *16*, if she will make a statement setting out the procedures which she has advised her Ministers to follow after the passing of the Single European Act to prevent *(a)* an undue volume of community directives, *(b)* harmonisation measures regarded by Her Majesty's Government as unnecessary and *(c)* the extension of the powers of the Commission beyond those envisaged by Her Majesty's Government when the Single Act was approved.

The Prime Minister: I shall ensure that the Government will continue to examine very carefully all proposals for EC legislation, to ensure that they are necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act and that they fall within agreed Community competence.

Government Information Officers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of Mr. Ingham's letter to Ms. Elizabeth Jenkins on a code of ethics for Government information officers.

The Prime Minister: No.

Government Agencies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Miniser if she will list all Government agencies *(a)* which individuals can join as members and *(b)* which seek sponsorship from private companies.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally.

HEALTH

General Practitioners

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he intends to make for general practitioners to attend suitable courses in business management to enable them to implement the relevant proposals in the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We shall be bringing forward proposals in due course to enable eligible general practitioners who opt to have practice budgets to ensure that the practice has the necessary management skills available to it.

Drug Budgets

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what adjustments he intends to make to the concept of indicative drug budgets to ensure that general practitioners who have high cost patients, such as the elderly and the chronic sick, on their practice lists are not financially penalised for prescribing treatment.

Mr. Mellor: The amount allocated to a practice for its indicative prescribing budget will fully reflect the presence on the practice's list of patients, such as the elderly and the chronic sick, who need a greater volume of drugs or more expensive drugs than others. No doctor will be penalised for prescribing necessary treatment to any patient. We expect doctors to examine their prescribing patterns to ensure that they prescribe only when and for as long as necessary and, where there is a choice of equally effective products, to prescribe the cheapest.

Medical Accidents

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health why information on awards to victims of medical accidents in respect of health authorities in England is not held centrally; and if he has any plans to gather such information.

Mr. Freeman: Awards for medical accidents in excess of £100,000 are notified to the Department. Awards below that figure fall within the delegated limits for authorities and are not notified separately to the centre. The Department is considering whether further information about medical accidents is needed and if so how it may be obtained.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to issue further advice to health authorities concerning appropriate action to be taken towards patients alleging medical accidents.

Mr. Freeman: Action in response to complaints by patients (including allegations about treatment and medical accidents) should be taken in accordance with directions issued with circular HC(88)37 on hospital complaints procedures. No further advice is contemplated.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to review the weight given to the interests of patients in relation to negotiations between health authorities and medical insurance organisations in the event of medical accidents.

Mr. Freeman: Negotiations between health authorities and medical defence organisations occur only when there is a prospect of a successful civil claim by a patient against a health authority or a medical practitioner represented by a medical defence organisation in respect of a medical accident. These negotiations are currently regulated by the terms of the agreement contained in memorandum HM(54)32. In such matters I would expect the best interests of the litigant patient to be protected by his or own legal advisors.

However we are currently consulting interested organisations on proposals whereby health authorities would indemnify medical and dental staff working in the NHS. This would bring them into line with other NHS staff who are already so covered. It is proposed that henceforth there will be no need for clinicians to be independently insured and therefore represented by medical defence organisations (although some may still wish to do so). This will necessarily involve review of the HM(54)32 agreement and in this regard my hon. Friend may be assured that the interests of NHS patients will be fully taken into account.

Operating Department Assistants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects the National Health Service Training Authority to report on competence based training for operating department assistants.

Mr. Mellor: The NHSTA has outlined a preliminary schedule of competences for operating department assistants which has been circulated for consultation. Work on a proposal to take forward the development of a national vocational qualification for operating department assistants is planned to start next month.

Blood Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the volume and value of blood products imported and *(b)* the percentage of the total blood products supply in the United Kingdom that comes from imports in each year since 1983; and whether any checks are made as to whether such products originate from blood that is sold rather than donated.

Mr. Freeman: The information held centrally about the level of imported blood products relates only to factor VIII concentrate and is given in the table.

Blood products imported into the United Kingdom are sourced from both blood that has been donated and purchased. The manufacturing sites of overseas manufacturers of licensed blood products (imported into the United Kingdom) are routinely inspected by or on behalf of the medicines inspectorate of the medicines control agency. One aim of these inspections is to ensure that the blood used is of good quality and is acceptable for use in the manufacture of the products concerned. Furthermore, samples of all commercially imported batches of blood products are routinely submitted to the national institute for biological standards and control for testing to ensure that they conform to laid down standards of quality.

	1983[1]	*1984*[1]	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
United Kingdom usage of imported factor VIII concentrate (millions of international units	39·5	38·5	50·9	53·8	59·2	n/a
Percentage of total United Kingdom usage of factor VIII concentrate	56·8	48·9	68·8	63·1	69·5	

[1] Does not include users with acquired haemophilia.

Self-governing Hospitals

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in considering the issue of self-governing status in respect of hospitals falling within the Islington district, what degree of priority he will attach to *(a)* the views of the chairman of the district health authority and *(b)* the voted views of the district health authority, the community health council, and the consultants at the respective hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: When I come to consider individual applications, I aim to take proper account of the views of all those with an interest.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the list of hospitals that each regional health authority has proposed to become self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: RHAs are still receiving and considering expressions of interest from hospitals. They have been asked to submit these to the Department by 31 May.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints have been made to *(a)* family practitioner committees and *(b)* the General Medical

Council regarding the prescribing of benzodiazepine drugs for periods of time greater than those recommended by the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. The right hon. Member may wish to contact the General Medical Council direct.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *552*, if he will commission a sample survey to discover how many of the 23,185,000 prescriptions for benzodiazepines dispensed in 1987 were repeat prescriptions being given on a long or medium-term basis.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have made every effort to ensure that doctors are aware of the problems which can arise from prolonged treatment with these drugs and to encourage good prescribing habits. In addition, the most recent guidance from the Committee on Safety of Medicines issued in January 1988 is repeated in the twice-yearly British National Formulary. It is now up to all doctors using their clinical judgment to take heed of this advice when deciding on the most appropriate treatment for each individual patient. A survey of repeat prescriptions would not be of additional value.

Nurses

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* state registered nurses, *(b)* state enrolled nurses and *(c)* auxiliary nurses are employed in each health authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 16 January at columns *115-118* for the information for England.

The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretry of State for Health if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that elderly persons in residential care are encouraged and enabled to manage their own finances whenever possible rather than being made to surrender their pension books and personal allowances.

Mr. Mellor: I agree that people in residential care homes should be encouraged to manage their own financial affairs whenever they are capable of doing so. We are considering whether guidance should be issued on the conduct of residents' financial affairs, taking into account the recommendations in the Wagner report on residential care.

GPs (Overprescribing)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretry of State for Health how many investigations of general practitioners for overprescribing have taken place in England since the National Health Service Committee Tribunal Regulations (S.I. 1974 No. 455) came into effect.

Mr. Mellor: There have been no referrals under Regulation 16 of the NHS (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations since 1974.

Support Tights

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make support tights available on prescription in addition to support stockings.

Mr. Mellor: No. I am satisfied that the present prescribable range of support stockings fully meets the clinical needs of most patients who require compression hosiery. If the equivalent tights were made available on GP prescription it would add to NHS costs without benefit to patients.

WALES

Inward Investment

5. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of inward investment in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Wales continues to attract very high levels of inward investment. In terms of related new jobs, Wales' share of inward investment to the United Kingdom was 20 per cent. in 1987. The provisional figures for 1988 indicate that this has increased to 22 per cent. This compares with 6 per cent. in 1979. Projects secured from abroad and the United Kingdom in 1988 promise over 11,000 new jobs and nearly £1·2 billion of capital investment.

Committee of Welsh District Councils

16. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Association of District Councils in Wales; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the Committee of Welsh District Councils at a meeting of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government finance on 8 December to discuss the Welsh rate support grant settlement for 1989-90.

Energy Conservation

17. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department is doing to promote energy conservation in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department's energy efficiency plan for 1989 is published today, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Prince of Wales Orthopaedic Hospital, Rhydlafar

18. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the future of the children's ward at the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital, Rhydlafar, South Glamorgan

Mr. Grist: We have received eight representations concerning the future of the ward.

British Coal

19. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss matters relating to its operations in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am in regular touch with the chairman of British Coal on matters relating to the corporation's operations in Wales.

Development Control

20. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what planning guidelines his Department intends to use for development control.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office continues to have regard to the planning guidance contained in planning policy and minerals planning guidance notes, departmental circulars and development control policy notes.

Psychiatric Patients

21. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what existing or interim arrangements there are for providing medium-secure facilities for psychiatric patients from Wales.

Mr. Grist: Secure facilities are available at Whitchurch hospital, Cardiff and North Wales hospital, Denbigh. Patients may also be referred to hospitals in England. Plans for four purpose-built medium secure units have been announced and discussions are in progress for the development of the first two. Arrangements are in hand to appoint the consultant forensic psychiatrist who, with the senior nurse already in post, will have a major role in planning and running the units.

Acid Rain

22. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the problem of acid rain in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We have received a number of representations from hon. Members, and organisations such as the Welsh water authority, the Wales tourist board, Snowdonia national park, the Country Landowners Association, Friends of the Earth Cymru, the Wales Green party and indvidual members of the public.

North Wales (Strategy)

23. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress being made in developing a strategy for North Wales following the Minister of State's examination of the implications of the completion of the A55.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am engaged in a series of meetings with the local authorities, which I hope to complete during the summer, to discuss opportunities in tourism, commerce and industry and how these can best be tackled.

Labour Statistics

24. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the change in the total number employed in Wales during the past two years.

Mr. Peter Walker: Between December 1986 and December 1988, the latest date for which information is available, the civilian work force in employment in Wales increased by 35,000. There have also been increases in the self-employed and those in higher education.

Epilepsy Association

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the Welsh Office received a grant application from the Wales Epilepsy Association; whether a reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: An application for grant made under section 64 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968 was received from the Wales Epilepsy Association in November 1988. The application was considered along with bids for funding under this section of the Act received from other voluntary organisations, and a reply was sent to the association on 3 May 1989.

Quarrying (Taff Ely)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to sanction any new quarrying in and around Taff Ely which might result in the despoilation of the remaining ridges, skylines, visible hillsides and forests of that area.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend can give no assurances relating to decisions which he may have to take in any particular area. General planning principles and policy considerations for mineral workings are described in mineral planning guidance note No. 1, issued jointly by the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment in January 1988.

Public Houses (Tenancies)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the likely effect of the recommendations of the recent Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the brewing industry on the livelihood of sitting tenants of public houses in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer in the United Kingdom made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the position of tenants. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has said that he is minded to implement the recommendations. He has also indicated that he is willing to receive representations on matters of concern.

Coal Imports

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the quantity of United States coal which has been imported via Newport docks and on its final destination.

Mr. Peter Walker: This is an operational matter for the importer, in this case the Central Electricity Generating Board. I am, however, aware of the board's announcement on 17 April of its intention to import 35,000 tonnes of American coal into Newport docks for trans-shipment to its Aberthaw power station.

River Taff (Pollution)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has assessed the extent to which the Welsh water authority's treatment plants in the Mid-Glamorgan area have been contributors to the accumulation of pollution and litter in the River Taff and its tributaries over the past three years.

Mr. Grist: No such assessment has been made.

A470-Porth Link Road

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress of the planned restructuring-refurbishment of the A473-A4058 link road between the A470 and Porth in Rhondda.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for Mid Glamorgan county council as local highway authority.

Welsh Water Authority (Monitoring Building)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sum has been allocated by the Welsh Office to help the Welsh water authority construct a reinforced, bunkered monitoring building at its south-eastern division headquarters at Nelson, Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Grist: The Department has undertaken to make a grant of £279,959 towards the cost of construction of the control and command centre at Nelson.

Heads of the Valleys Road

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to authorise the upgrading to dual-carriageway status of the whole length of the Heads of the Valleys trunk road.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Traffic flows on the Heads of the Valleys road are well within the road's capacity. Trends in traffic growth will be kept under review.

Channel Tunnel

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to agree to any investment proposals by British Rail to upgrade its Reading-Redhill-Ashford line in order to provide south Wales with a direct, high-speed rail access for passengers and freight to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. British Rail has not yet made proposals to the Government for Channel tunnel passenger and freight services. Careful consideration will be given to its proposals at the appropriate time.

Severn Crossing

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that a second crossing of the Severn will be in place by 1995.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Subject to the present excellent rate of progress being maintained by the Department of Transport, a second crossing could be completed in 1995. My right hon. Friend will continue to give this important project his full support.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of overseas investment into the United Kingdom Wales currently receives.

Mr. Peter Walker: In terms of related new jobs, Wales' share of inward investment was 20 per cent. in 1987. The provisional figures for 1988 indicate that this has increased to 22 per cent. This compares with 6 per cent. in 1979.

Beaches

14. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that beaches in Wales meet the European Community standards of cleanliness.

Mr. Grist: None. There are no European Community standards of cleanliness for beaches.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost of each of *(a)* Colwyn bay and *(b)* Inmel bay of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Grist: The authority is currently reviewing its programme of works, which aims to achieve compliance of all listed waters. The full cost of the programme has yet to be evaluated. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the waters at Colwyn bay have complied with the standards of the directive over the past three years.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library the detailed coliform and E. coli results of all samples collected in the summer of 1988 for each of the 48 beaches summarised in deposited document NS 4754.

Mr. Grist: This information is contained on the public registers maintained by the Welsh water authority.

Young Farmers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the assistance which his Department makes to help young farmers.

Mr. Peter Walker: Young farmers (under 40) with an approved improvement plan under the farm and conservation grant scheme can qualify for a 25 per cent. increase in the total grant they receive. In addition officers of the agricultural development and advisory service are always ready to help young farmers who need advice.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give by area the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy reported in each of the past three years and the number reported in each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each county in Wales during 1987, 1988 and 1989 (to 28 April) was:

County	*Number of cases*		
	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Clwyd	0	13	19
Dyfed	8	64	79
Mid Glamorgan	0	5	5
South Glamorgan	0	8	9
West Glamorgan	0	1	1
Gwent	0	20	24

County	Number of cases 1987	1988	1989
Gwynedd	0	7	8
Powys	0	13	10

There were no reported cases in 1986.

The number of reported cases in Wales in each of the past 12 months is as follows:

	1988 May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	1989 January	February	March	April
Clwyd	3	0	0	1	1	3	3	1	3	4	2	10
Dyfed	5	3	2	15	12	3	9	13	10	20	20	29
Mid Glamorgan	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	2	0	2	1
South Glamorgan	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	3	1	2	3
West Glamorgan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Gwent	1	1	0	3	4	0	3	5	4	9	4	7
Gwynedd	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	4
Powys	1	0	2	0	3	5	1	0	2	3	2	3

Farm and Conservation Grant

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken by his Department to ensure that farmers can obtain application forms for the new farm and conservation grant.

Mr. Peter Walker: Application forms to join the farm and conservation grant scheme are held by the divisional offices of WOAD. Claim forms are currently being printed and are expected to be available from the divisional offices this week.

Land (Planning Permission)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the amount of land for which planning permission is granted but on which no subsequent development takes place within the permitted time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989, *(b)* the number of the above applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out in that period.

Mr. Peter Walker: Two hundred and sixty-five applications for regional selective assistance grants were received by my Department and 202 of these processed in the period from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989. The total amount of grant paid out over the same period was £36·2 million[1].

Note: [1] RSA project and training grants.

Innovation Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the total number of applications received for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the regional enterprise grant scheme 120 applications for innovation projects were received by my Department and 31 offers of grant to the value of £598,165 were made in the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 20 March 1989 for details of planned and future expenditure provision.

Investment Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the total number of applications received for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the regional enterprise grant scheme 319 applications for investment projects were received by my Department and 135 offers of grant to the value of £818,460 were made in the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 20 March 1989 for details of planned and future expenditure provision.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of applications for regional development grants outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of those outstanding applications that have subsequently been processed, *(c)* the number of applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out in regional development grants to those applicants.

Mr. Peter Walker: All 1,935 applications for revised regional development grant (RDG II) outstanding on 31 March 1988 have been actioned, and decisions had been made on 1,855 by 31 March 1989 leaving a balance of 80. Payments authorised on these applications total £14·8 million. Total expenditure on RDG II during the 1988-89 financial year was £45 million.

SCOTLAND

Social Security (Glasgow, Provan)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will restore in 1989 moneys the budgets of the Department of Social Security offices in Glasgow, Provan to 1988-89 levels.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

No. Allocations were made in accordance with a national allocation formula which applied to all local offices. A note explaining the basis on which the 1989-90 allocations were calculated is in the Library.

The allocations of both Glasgow, Provan and Glasgow, Parkhead local offices represent £114 per head of their respective income support caseloads compared with the average allocation per head for Great Britain of £46.

Tree Planting

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment his Department has made of the impact upon the number of trees planted of the 1988 Budget and the ending of schedule D reliefs; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many trees have been planted *(a)* in the last year and *(b)* in the 10 years before the 1988 Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amount of tree planting grant aided by the Forestry Commission since 1979 is shown in the following table. As the figures for the year to 31 March 1989 include a substantial amount of planting which was carried out before the 1988 Budget, or subsequently with the benefit of transitional tax reliefs, it is too early to say what impact the changes made in that Budget will have on planting levels.

Year ending 31 March	Area (Thousands of hectares) New planting	Restocking
1979	8	3
1980	8	3
1981	8	3
1982	12	3
1983	13	3
1984	17	3
1985	16	3
1986	19	4
1987	19	4
1988	24	5
[1]1989	25	5

[1] Estimate.

Note: Information is available only by the area of trees planted, not the number.

Schools (Books and Equipment)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is given in the following tables which have been compiled from local authority financial returns. Expenditure on equipment was not separately identified in these returns until 1982-83. There have been some variations from year to year in the recording of expenditure under these two headings. In particular some of the figures for expenditure on library books may include some expenditure on items of equipment.

Table 1
Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials at outturn prices

Year	Books			Education tools, equipment and materials		
	Primary £	Secondary £	Special £	Primary £	Secondary £	Special £
1978-79	4·54	8·31	7·27	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979-80	5·49	9·61	11·25	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	5·84	9·29	12·20	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	6·54	9·77	12·17	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	7·03	10·03	13·64	8·18	27·33	48·46
1983-84	8·99	13·35	22·64	7·28	25·36	42·11
1984-85	9·55	13·83	21·41	8·91	30·09	57·77
1985-86	8·91	13·47	21·37	8·33	30·26	53·42
1986-87	10·93	16·67	22·22	8·92	33·85	61·98
1987-88	9·25	12·93	17·42	11·71	44·42	77·58

Table 2
Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials adjusted to 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator

Year	Books			Education tools, equipment and materials		
	Primary £	Secondary £	Special £	Primary £	Secondary £	Special £
1978-79	9·28	16·98	14·85	n/a	n/a	n/a
1979-80	9·62	16·83	19·71	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980-81	8·63	13·73	18·03	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981-82	8·80	13·15	16·38	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982-83	8·84	12·61	17·15	10·28	34·36	60·93
1983-84	10·80	16·04	27·20	8·75	30·47	50·60
1984-85	10·93	15·84	24·51	10·20	34·45	66·15
1985-86	9·67	14·62	23·20	9·04	32·85	57·99
1986-87	11·48	17·51	23·34	9·37	35·55	65·09
1987-88	9·25	12·93	17·42	11·71	44·42	77·58

Table 3: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books at outturn prices expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	100·0	100·0	100·0
1979-80	120·9	115·6	154·7
1980-81	128·6	111·8	167·8
1981-82	144·1	117·6	167·4
1982-83	154·8	120·7	187·6
1983-84	198·0	160·6	311·4
1984-85	210·4	166·4	294·5
1985-86	196·3	162·1	293·9
1986-87	240·7	200·6	305·6
1987-88	203·7	155·6	239·6

Table 4: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books adjusted to 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator, expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary	Special
1978-79	100·0	100·0	100·0
1979-80	103·7	99·1	132·7
1980-81	93·0	80·9	121·4
1981-82	94·8	77·4	110·3
1982-83	95·3	74·3	115·5
1983-84	116·4	94·5	183·2
1984-85	117·8	93·3	165·1
1985-86	104·2	86·1	156·2
1986-87	123·7	103·1	157·2
1987-88	99·7	76·1	117·3

Note:
Tables 3 and 4 do not include expenditure by authorities on educational tools, equipment and materials from 1982-83 as shown in tables 1 and 2.

Private Roads

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department intends to implement the recommendation in the Stodart report that private roads which form part of a public highway network should be taken over by the highways authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Cognisance has already been taken of the recommendation of the Stodart report in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. I shall write to the hon. Member explaining the details of this.

SSHA (Rent Increase)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why he recommended a minimum rent increase of 9·74 per cent. for tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association, Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State recommended a minimum average rent increase of £1·80 per week, which was a 9·55 per cent. increase, to the Scottish Special Housing Association. This recommendation was based on projections of costs and income and was set at a level which would sustain a reasonable level of repairs and maintenance of the stock. It was for the association's council of management to decide on the actual rent increase.

Adam House, Edinburgh

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the ownership and state of repair of the Adam house, Mavisbank, in Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that ownership of Mavisbank house is shared jointly by three citizens of the United States of America. The house is presently derelict. Emergency works were carried out in 1987, at public expense, to safeguard the stability of the house.

Social Work Department (Strathclyde Region)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Strathclyde region social work department; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such meetings have been requested or held.

Nurses

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* state registered nurses, *(b)* state enrolled nurses and *(c)* auxiliary nurses are employed in each health board in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table.

Nursing staff employed by Health Boards 30 September 1988 (provisional)

Health Board	Whole-time equivalent		
	State registered[1]	Enrolled	Auxiliary[2]
Argyll and Clyde	1,843·6	705·4	1,629·2
Ayrshire and Arran	1,376·3	589·2	1,005·1
Borders	501·6	163·5	344·1
Dumfries and Galloway	811·3	260·7	519·9
Fife	1,339·3	731·3	931·1
Forth Valley	1,350·0	474·0	1,247·0
Grampian	2,343·6	1,079·5	1,611·1
Greater Glasgow	6,102·6	2,081·9	4,028·1
Highland	1,153·1	328·3	545·6
Lanarkshire	2,074·7	1,178·0	1,289·0
Lothian	3,998·6	1,187·4	2,360·7
Orkney	67·6	72·0	35·5
Shetland	102·5	51·7	41·8
Tayside	2,327·2	1,120·0	1,615·5
Western Isles	179·1	27·8	59·7

[1] Includes teaching and administrative nurses.
[2] Includes all unqualified nursing staff.

Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund moneys in respect of the various schemes from 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Details of contributions and receipts in 1988-89 will be presented to Parliament later this year in the appropriation accounts for expenditure class XVI relating to agricultural support for which the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has responsibility. Provisional outturn figures for the year are set out in the table. To these amounts should be added the Scottish share of market support expenditure incurred by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce which in the United Kingdom in 1988-89 is currently estimated to be £984 million.

	£ million
1. *Reimbursement schemes*	
Capital Grants/Farm Structure	2·691
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	10·146

	£ million
Integrated Development Programme for the Western Isles	0·796
Fish Producers' Organisations	—
Marketing and Processing Projects	2·380
Fishery Projects	3·375
	19·388
2. *Pre-funded schemes*	
Annual Ewe Premium	28·684
Suckler Cow Premium	6·706
Non-Marketing of Milk	—
Milk Outgoers	6·293
Cereal Co-responsibility Levy Refunds	0·723
	42·406
Overall total	61·794

GPs (Overprescribing)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions of general practitioners for overprescribing have taken place in Scotland by the health board in the last *(a)* five years, *(b)* 10 years and *(c)* 15 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Financial penalties for overprescribing are normally imposed by health boards on general practitioners only where advice and guidance have failed to have effect. Such penalties have been imposed in four cases in the last five years, in nine cases in the last 10 years and in 12 cases in the last 15 years.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to assist local authorities to extend the provision of pre-school education to children in their area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The planning figure for nursery education included in the revenue support grant settlement has been increased by almost 15 per cent. between 1988-89 and 1989-90. It is, however, for local authorities to determine the level of provision of nursery education in their area in the light of local need and competing priorities.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the proportion of children aged three years and four years who are in receipt of local authority provided nursery education in each islands and regional council in Scotland; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 17 January at column *62*.

Buses (Privatisation)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which local authority bus groups public limited companies are still under the ownership of the regional councils in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The bus companies concerned are Tayside Public Transport Company Ltd, Strathclyde Buses Ltd and Lothian Region Transport plc.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to require local authority bus public limited companies to introduce schemes to encourage the privatisation of their respective companies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The Government wish to encourage local authorities to privatise their bus companies. The possibility of seeking statutory powers to require them to do so has not been ruled out.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give assistance to the employees and management of the Tayside bus groups in its scheme to privatise the groups, along the lines of that provided to the Scottish bus groups.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The arrangements for any proposed sale of Tayside Public Transport Company Ltd are a matter for Tayside regional council. My right hon. and learned Friend's responsibility is limited to approving any such sale.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Greenhouse Effect

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy at the next Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting to take steps to initiate a European study on the effects of sea rise from the greenhouse global warming effect on low-lying agricultural land.

Mr. Ryder: Atmospheric warming is of global significance and there will be a range of consequences. The effect on low-lying agricultural land is one of the many aspects which will need to be studied. But research into the greenhouse effect is still at a relatively early stage, and specialised studies such as this will be more appropriate later on.

For the moment there are several international studies and conferences taking place. For example, the United Kingdom is a participatory member of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, a worldwide organisation which is studying all aspects of global warming, and we are a party to joint studies with European researchers to investigate the potential effects to the coastline of a rise in sea level.

Quality of Life

Mr. P[illegible]ey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries if he will set out in the *Official Report* details of the policies introduced by him since 1983 with the intention of improving the quality of life for farming communities.

Mr. Ryder: Since 1983 we have introduced a wide range of measures, including those set out below, intended to further the interests of farming communities as a whole. Some measures have been designed with more remote rural areas in mind.

There have been a number of important changes in capital grant schemes since 1983. These were designed to increase assistance for investments which have a positive impact on the farm environment and the wider rural economy. On 1 December 1983 grants for hedge and

shelter belt planting and traditional wall building were increased from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. in the less-favoured areas, while grants for hedge removal were withdrawn.

The agriculture improvement scheme, introduced on 1 October 1985, extended higher rates of grant to environmental improvements in the lowlands. It also offered grants of 60 per cent. in the LFAs, and 30 per cent. elsewhere, for the installation and upgrading of facilities to prevent farm pollution.

The farm and conservation grant scheme introduced on 20 February 1989 extended the range of conservation items to include repairs to traditional buildings and the regeneration of heather moors and native woodlands. Lowland grants for facilities to handle farm effluent were increased to 50 per cent.

The farm diversification grant scheme introduced on 1 January 1988 offers grants of 25 per cent. towards the capital costs of establishing a wide range of diversified non-agricultural businesses on farms. These can bring additional employment to farmers and their families as well as broadening the farm income base.

Since 1987 we have established 10 environmentally sensitive areas in England, covering over 300,000 hectares of land. There are now 19 ESAs in the United Kingdom covering over 790,000 hectares. This represents a considerable commitment to helping to protect some of the most beautiful parts of the country. The voluntary scheme, which encourages environmentally beneficial agricultural practices, has been very popular among farmers in the designated areas and was warmly welcomed by the countryside agencies.

The farm woodland scheme launched on 1 October 1988 has several objectives, including the creation of an alternative source of income and rural employment, and the provision of environmental benefits. Initial take-up of the scheme has been very encouraging with over 5,700 hectares worth of applications in the first six months.

The set-aside scheme, introduced last year, offers support for producers reducing surplus production and new land-use opportunities for the enterprising farmer. The set-aside scheme also contains a good deal for the environment. There are statutory rules for the maintenance of land fallowed under set-aside designed to keep it in good condition and minimise the risk of nitrate leaching. Only some pesticides and fertilisers can be used and only then in special circumstances. Environmental features like trees, hedges and watercourses must be maintained.

The agricultural holdings legislation underwent major changes in 1984 following lengthy consultation with the industry. A new rent formula was introduced, statutory succession was ended for new tenancies and a number of other technical changes were made.

We have negotiated improvements in the EC milk quota system allowing producers greater flexibility to make use of available quota by leasing arrangements and other means. In conjunction with prudent market management measures, quota restraints have contributed towards the recent recovery in dairy farm incomes.

In 1984 we extended the less-favoured areas by 1·2 million hectares. As a result 26,550 holdings became eligible for hill livestock compensatory allowances and enhanced rates of capital grant. As part of the 1989-90 price fixing it was agreed that all milk producers in less-favoured areas should not pay the milk co-responsibility levy.

Pigs (Sweat Box System)

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had as a result of the Farm Animals Welfare Council's recommendations banning the sweat box system for keeping pigs; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government consulted a wide range of interested organisations on this and other recommendations made by the Farm Animal Welfare Council on pig production systems, and took account of their comments in preparing their response, which was published in March. We shall be seeking to have a ban implemented on a European Community basis.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his replies of Thursday 27 April, *Official Report*, column *678*, and Friday 14 April, *Official Report*, column *748*, to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, why information concerning ante-mortem inspections of cattle is not available for 1989.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy identified at markets and slaughterhouses is monitored but the information is not held centrally at present. We are making arrangements to do so and will let the hon. Member have the information requested when it is available.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about increasing the compensation for bovine spongiform encephalopathy from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received a number of representations seeking an increase in the level of compensation. I believe however that compensation of 50 per cent. is fair, given that the animals are suffering from a terminal illness and are, for practical purposes, valueless but are in fact valued as if unaffected by the disease.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give by area the number of cases of bovine spongiform encephalophathy reported in each of the past three years and the number reported in each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested for England, broken down by county, is as follows:

Number of confirmed cases of BSE by month of confirmation

	1988								*1989*			
	May	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*
Bedfordshire	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	3	2
Cambridgeshire	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	3	4	2	1
Essex	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Hertfordshire	0	0	0	0	5	3	0	0	1	1	0	3

	1988								1989		
	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Lincolnshire	5	0	2	3	1	6	4	5	6	4	4	2
Norfolk	1	2	0	8	0	2	5	3	12	6	11	6
Northamptonshire	2	0	4	0	0	1	0	4	2	4	4	7
Suffolk	0	1	1	0	5	7	7	1	7	6	7	6
Cheshire	0	1	3	7	8	3	1	5	6	0	6	9
Derbyshire	0	2	0	2	1	8	5	2	3	6	3	11
Herefordshire/Worcestershire	1	2	1	6	2	9	6	7	15	9	11	19
Lancashire	0	0	1	5	4	7	7	10	4	5	9	11
Leicestershire	0	0	1	1	4	10	11	8	7	14	11	13
Manchester	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Merseyside	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1
Shropshire	2	0	7	3	11	4	4	9	16	5	10	16
Staffordshire	2	0	2	2	5	4	4	14	9	1	7	16
West Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Warwickshire	3	0	0	1	1	5	0	2	5	3	2	13
Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
Cumbria	0	2	0	0	7	4	5	4	13	10	3	4
Durham	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	1
Humberside	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	1	2	0	3	3
Northumberland	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	5	6	0	7	1
North Yorkshire	0	1	3	8	13	9	11	7	16	14	15	11
South Yorkshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
West Yorkshire	0	1	0	1	0	1	6	91	1	0	1	1
Berkshire	3	0	1	6	3	1	6	1	11	2	3	7
Buckinghamshire	0	1	3	2	0	0	3	0	1	4	2	3
Hampshire	5	2	2	5	11	17	14	15	28	45	28	23
Isle of Wight	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	1	4	2	2	3
Kent	2	0	1	8	1	3	4	8	20	23	20	14
Oxfordshire	2	0	1	6	3	5	11	4	6	17	13	12
Surrey	2	0	1	2	1	5	5	8	8	5	7	2
East Sussex	0	1	2	1	0	4	5	5	5	8	4	8
West Sussex	1	1	2	7	5	14	7	17	19	15	17	12
Avon	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	3	7	4	18	9
Cornwall	26	12	12	18	14	27	22	45	48	55	55	34
Devon	6	28	14	20	28	26	55	25	74	63	73	79
Dorset	1	4	4	5	14	29	18	24	36	70	61	47
Gloucestershire	0	4	1	8	5	21	15	11	33	22	15	16
Somerset	0	3	4	10	14	31	18	19	42	36	43	41
Wiltshire	1	1	2	14	6	17	20	16	39	44	38	39

Number of confirmed cases of BSE by year of confirmation

	1986	1987	1988
Bedfordshire	0	0	7
Cambridgeshire	0	0	6
Essex	o	o	5
Hertfordshire	0	0	8
Lincolnshire	0	0	28
Norfolk	0	0	18
Northants	0	0	11
Suffolk	0	0	28
Cheshire	0	0	36
Derby	0	0	22
Hereford and Worcester	0	4	40
Lancashire	0	1	38
Lincolnshire	0	2	39
Manchester	0	0	0
Merseyside	0	0	1
Nottinghamshire	0	2	6
Salop	0	0	51
Staffordshire	0	0	37
West Midlands	0	0	2
Warwick	0	0	13
Cleveland	0	0	1
Cumbria	0	1	30
Durham	0	0	3
Humber	0	0	6
Northumberland	0	0	10
Yorkshire North	0	1	61
Yorkshire South	0	0	2
Yorkshire West	0	0	10
Berkshire	0	2	24
Buckinghamshire	0	2	15
Hampshire	0	2	82
Isle of Wight	0	0	9
Kent	5	11	40
Oxon	0	0	36
Surrey	0	1	28
Sussex East	0	2	21
Sussex West	0	2	61

	1986	1987	1988
Avon	0	3	16
Cornwall	0	16	216
Devon	0	33	248
Dorset	0	0	103
Gloucestershire	0	3	84
Somerset	1	8	127
Wiltshire	0	6	86

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the raising of the suckler cow premium to the level of the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have received numerous representations urging payment of the suckler cow premium at the maximum permissible amount (which would include both the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund contribution and the discretionary contribution from national funds).

These representations have been carefully considered and I hope to be in a position to make a statement shortly.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to be able to make an announcement about the amount of the Government's contribution to the new suckler cow premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: An announcement on the rate of the suckler cow premium will be made before the start of the new scheme year on 15 June.

TRANSPORT

Detonators and Explosives (Transport)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to strengthen the law as it relates to the transportation of detonators and high explosives in the same vehicle on roads in Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 4 April, at columns *66-67*.

The new Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations were laid before Parliament on 11 April and come into force on 3 July this year.

Western Environmental Improvement Route

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has made, or will make, an environmental impact assessment on the western environment improvement route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No decision will be taken on the western environmental improvement route until the west London assessment study has been completed later this year. If it is then decided to proceed with the scheme, an environmental assessment will be produced in accordance with the Highways (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988/1241).

NERC (Research Projects)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the research projects undertaken for his Department by the Natural Environment Research Council during the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None.

Car Telephones

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in how many road accidents, for each of the last five years, mobile car telephones have been a contributory factor.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available. One case has been brought to our attention in recent correspondence where the use of an in-car telephone may have been a contributory factor. The guidance in the Highway Code is clear—do not use a hand-held phone while driving.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions there have been for road traffic offences connected with the use of mobile car telephones.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1987 over 87,500 motorists were found guilty of careless driving. Information is not available on how many of these offences involved the use of in-car telephones.

Exhaust Emissions

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regulations covering the emission of fumes from vehicle exhausts; and if he has any proposals to review them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations and relevant amendments are:

Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 (S.I. 1986 No. 1078), Regulation 61.
Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) (No. 6) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988 No. 1524).
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval for Goods Vehicles) (Great Britain) Regulations 1982 (S.I. 1982 No. 1271), Regulation 4.
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval for Goods Vehicles) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1984 (S.I. 1984 No. 697).
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval for Goods Vehicles) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (S.I. 1986 No. 427).
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval for Goods Vehicles) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987 No. 1508).
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval for Goods Vehicles) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988 No. 1523)
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval) (Great Britain) Regulations 1984 (S.I. 1984 No. 981), Regulation 4.
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987 No. 1509).
Motor Vehicles (Type Approval) (Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1988 (S.I. 1988 No. 1522).

We shall amend the regulations to enforce the provisions of Community Directives 88/77/EEC and 88/436/EEC.

Tighter standards for all categories of vehicle are still under negotiation in the Community. When these are agreed, we shall make further amendments to the regulations.

Parkland Walk, Hornsey

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received opposing the Ove Arup suggestions for use of the Parkland walk, Hornsey, as a roadway; and at what rate per week such letters are currently being received.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Many. The weekly rate varies. There is, too, opposition to the re-use of the rail line.

Air Transport

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has considered the implications for his policy on air transport of the judgment by the Court of Session in the case brought by Air 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon *[pursuant to the reply, 2 May, 1989 column 119]:* I am making new traffic distribution rules for Scotland, taking proper account of the written judgment of the Court of Session, to ensure that effect continues to be given to the Government's Scottish lowland airports policy, as set out in the 1985 White Paper (Cmnd. 9542).

The White Paper said that this policy, under which Prestwick is designated as the gateway for long-haul flights, would be reviewed if by 1989 there had not been a steady improvement in Prestwick's financial results. Earlier this year, the chairman of BAA plc requested an immediate review on general grounds.

Though Prestwick's financial position has in fact enjoyed a steady improvement, I have nevertheless considered the BAA request and have consulted my right

hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I have concluded that a review of current policy would not be appropriate.

The Government are, however, conscious of the belief that Prestwick would be better able to play its part in meeting demand for air transport in Scotland if it enjoyed better surface access. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is making a separate statement about this.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Students

36. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many students on Overseas Development Administration grants, and from which countries of origin, are currently studying in the United Kingdom; what is the comparable information for five, 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: More than 14,350 overseas students were studying in the United Kingdom on ODA grants, or held grants from organisations financed from the aid programme, in the 1988-89 financial year. I shall arrange for a list of their countries of origin to be published in the *Official Report*. Comparable figures for 1983, 1978 and 1973 were 11,847, 14,387 and 14,970 respectively.

The information for students on ODA grants is as follows:

Country	*Number here financial year 1988-89*
Afghanistan	17
Africa (Regional)	4
Algeria	50
Angola	44
Anguilla	3
Antigua	11
Bahamas	—
Bangladesh	593
Barbados	29
Belize	23
Bermuda	2
Benin	25
Bhutan	28
Bolivia	34
Botswana	320
Brazil	89
British Virgin Islands	9
Burkina Faso	19
Burma	82
Burundi	5
Cameroon	170
Cape Verde Islands	6
Caribbean Regional	25
Central African Republic	6
Chad	13
Chile	15
China	1,159
Colombia	81
Congo	17
Costa Rica	20
Cyprus	67
Djibouti	6
Dominica	16
Dominican Republic	4
Ecuador	47
Egypt	132
Ethiopia	87
Falklands	33
Fiji	38
Gabon	7
Gambia	82
Ghana	265
Gibraltar	23
Grenada	18
Guatemala	5
Guinea Bissau	6
Guinea Conakry	22
Guyana	41
Honduras	13
Hong Kong	36
India	1,597
Indonesia	284
Ivory Coast	18
Jamaica	43
Jordan	94
Kenya	831
Kiribati	19
Korea	18
Lebanon	—
Lesotho	131
Liberia	52
Madagascar	17
Malawi	599
Malaysia	176
Maldive Islands	40
Mali	25
Malta	8
Mauritania	17
Mauritius	159
Mexico	80
Montserrat	11
Morocco	24
Mozambique	157
Namibia	181
Nepal	208
Nicaragua	—
Niger	24
Nigeria	389
Oman	49
Pakistan	405
Panama	17
Papua New Guinea	2
Paraguay	25
Peru	53
Philippines	81
Rwanda	8
Senegal	32
Seychelles	47
Sierra Leone	146
Singapore	12
Solomon Islands	40
Somalia	75
South Africa	492
Sri Lanka	257
St. Helena	44
St. Kitts and Nevis	13
St. Lucia	16
St. Vincent	18
Sudan	306
Swaziland	158
Syria	1
Tanzania	467
Thailand	108
Togo	22
Tonga	16
Trinidad and Tobago	10
Tunisia	18
Turkey	27
Turks and Caicos	27
Tuvalu	10
Uganda	458
Vanuatu	25
Western Samoa	3
Yemen Arab Republic	122

Country	Number here financial year 1988-89
Yemen PDR	26
Zaire	51
Zambia	471
Zimbabwe	311
Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADGC)	101
UN Water Decade	30
Total	13,649

West Bank and Gaza Strip

37. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for increasing aid in the current and next financial year to the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: We aim to increase our bilateral programme to the West Bank and Gaza to over £1 million this year. Our contribution to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees rose to £5·25 million last year and has been increased to £5·5 million this year; in addition we are providing £0·25 million for a special study of housing.

Kampuchea

38. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give figures for the level of Her Majesty's Government's aid given to Kampuchea in 1988; and if he will make a statement on future aid policy for Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid to Cambodia amounted to £402,000 in the 1988-89 financial year. This comprised a contribution of £100,000 to the special FAO/World Food Programme appeal, £250,000 to the UNICEF programme, and £52,000 on projects administered by British voluntary agencies.

It is still too early to consider the provision of Government-to-Government aid. We will reconsider the position when Vietnam has fully withdrawn from its illegal occupation of Cambodia and an acceptable political settlement is in place.

43. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give figures for the level of United Kingdom aid given to Kampuchea in 1988; and if he will make a statement on future aid policy for Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid to Cambodia amounted to £402,000 in the 1988-89 financial year. This comprised a contribution of £100,000 to the special FAO/World Food Programme appeal, £250,000 to the UNICEF programme, and £52,000 on projects administered by British Voluntary agencies.

It is still too early to consider the provision of Government-to-Government aid. We will reconsider the position when Vietnam has fully withdrawn from its illegal occupation of Cambodia and an acceptable political settlement is in place.

Africa (Refugees)

39. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is providing for refugees in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1988 we provided nearly £31 million for refugees and displaced persons in Africa. This included Britain's share of the European Community's refugee assistance. So far this year we have announced a total of over £14 million in assistance for refugees and displaced persons in countries including Sudan, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia and Uganda.

Namibia

40. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have for aid to Namibia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I expect our programme to Namibia to continue its present focus on English language training and scholarships, on which we are spending £1·5 million this year. I have also announced £500,000 of aid to help repatriate refugees.

Women

41. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid development policy in relation to women.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our recent booklet, "Women, Development and the British Aid Programme", copies of which are in the Library, explains our women in development policy and progress in implementing it.

Ethiopia (Somalian Refugees)

42. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid given by the United Kingdom to Somalian refugees in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the outbreak of the civil conflict in Somalia last year, we have provided assistance totalling some £2·45 million for Somali refugees in Ethiopia. We have provided a further £2·73 million in support of programmes, run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for the benefit of both Sudanese and Somali refugees in Ethiopia.

Amnesty International

44. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Amnesty International to discuss human rights aspects of Her Majesty's Government's aid policy.

Mr. Chris Patten: Amnesty International is one of a number of human rights organisations with which Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have regular consultations to discuss all aspects of human rights policy.

Child Health Care

45. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to support immunisation and other programmes to improve child health in the developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: We support immunisation programmes and other measures to improve child health care through our contributions to the United Nations Children's Fund and the special programmes of the World Health Organisation; through our bilaterally-funded health-care projects, including those financed jointly with non-governmental organisations; and through our support for research.

Nicaragua

46. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of aid given to Nicaragua by Her Majesty's Government in 1988, expressed as per capita sum of the population of Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: The level of aid given to Nicaragua by Her Majesty's Government in 1988 through the European Community, disaster relief and other channels was around £1·05 per capita.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas development budget is devoted to helping overseas countries in their efforts against AIDS.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have committed over £17·6 million in support of activities aimed specifically at helping to prevent the further spread of AIDS. Of this, about £11 million was spent in the past two financial years, representing some 0·4 per cent. of the overseas aid budget for those years. Much of our help is given through the World Health Organisation. We are currently the third largest donor to its global programme on AIDS. This year, subject to parliamentary approval, we shall contribute a further £4·5 million to the programme.

ENVIRONMENT

Property Services Agency

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the course of his examining the case for transferring Property Services Agency staff from Newmarket in the rural district of Forest Heath to the city of Cambridge, he took account of the submissions made to him by the Cambridgeshire Small Business Group about the impact on business and jobs and of the shortage and high cost of land in Cambridge and it's environs; how much land Property Services Agency now occupies at the Brooklands avenue site in Cambridge; how many civil servants of all Departments work there; what is his policy on accommodating civil servants in town centre sites in single storey accommodation built during the second world war; and whether, in view of his study of the housing situation in Cambridge, he will invite the Property Services Agency to reconsider its intention to abandon its site in Newmarket in favour of accommodation in Cambridge.

Mr. Chope: The site at Brooklands avenue, Cambridge, comprising some 30 acres, contains offices housing about 1,100 civil servants. The decision to transfer 49 Property Services Agency staff from Newmarket to Cambridge was taken some time ago on grounds of operational efficiency. It did not necessitate the acquisition of any more land. The chairman of the Cambridgeshire Small Business Group wrote to my right hon. Friend in March this year and has received a reply to the points he made in his letter. There is no reason to change the decision about the closure of the Property Services Agency office in Newmarket.

Brooklands Site, Cambridge

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the market value with planning consent for residential use of the Brooklands site currently occupied by Government servants in Cambridge; how many square feet of office space are occupied per civil servant employed on this site; and what is the average space per office employee in *(a)* the city of Cambridge, *(b)* the town of Newmarket and *(c)* the London borough of Westminster.

Mr. Chope: The market value of land for housing in the Cambridge area is estimated to be around £650,000 an acre depending on size, location and planning constraints. The 1,100 staff at Brooklands avenue occupy about 175,000 sq ft of office and circulation space, an average of 159 sq ft each. These staff, like all civil servants throughout the country, are accommodated in accordance with nationally agreed space standards.

Sea Levels

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been commissioned into the likely effect of a rise in sea levels on wild birds which depend on Britain's estuaries and soft coasts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Government Departments are currently spending nearly £13 million on research into climate change. Whilst some of this is related to the effects of a resulting rise in sea levels, none is directed specifically at the effects on birds habitats.

The Department has commissioned research to predict the effects of reductions in shore width caused by land claim on estuarine wading bird numbers. A report on this research will be available shortly. We intend to utilise and extend these studies to examine the impacts of reductions in shore width from the seaward side, resulting from sea levels rise.

Roman Remains (London)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 18 April, *Official Report*, column 77, what is involved in preservation by record.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Preservation by record is a general term used to describe the process of documenting by means of photographic record, written report and where appropriate the display of the important artefacts/remains that have been uncovered in the course of an excavation.

Community Charge

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy to take steps to provide protection from double charging under the community charge system for an individual, who owns his

own home and who is required to live in accommodation provided for him by his employer; if he will undertake consultations for this purpose; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what guidance he has issued to local authorities on the liability to community charge after April 1990 of a teacher in an independent boarding school who owns his own home at a distance from the school and lives in school accommodation either *(a)* as a condition of his employment or *(b)* for convenience, as to whether an exemption from either personal community charge or standard community charge will apply in any such case, and as to whether a maximum limit will be prescribed for the standard community charge in any such case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to make any special provision for individuals in the circumstances described by my hon. Friend. Domestic property which is not used as a sole or main residence will give rise to a standard community charge.

In determining the level of the standard charge for their areas, local authorities already have a discretion to set this at a multiple of 0, ¼, 1, 1¼ or 2 of the personal charge.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the illustrative community charge levels for each local authority in England for 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 April at column *532*.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on *(a)* the means of distribution being used to distribute the household community charge leaflet and *(b)* the cost of this distribution.

Mr. Gummer: I have written to the hon. Member.

Longford Hall, Stretford

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received concerning Longford hall, Stretford;

(2) if he will investigate allegations that work has taken place at Longford hall, Stretford in contravention of regulations affecting listed buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations have been received on behalf of the Longford District Conservation Area Association. These concerned the proposed sale of Longford hall, its present state of repair and works alleged to have been carried out without listed building consent.

It is primarily for Trafford metropolitan borough council, both as owners of the hall and as planning authority, to take all appropriate steps to secure the building from deterioration and to ensure compliance with listed building procedures. We understand from the council that the recent work was needed to clear up debris left by vandalism, and that security will be increased to deter further unauthorised access. It hopes soon to finalise its proposals for the future of the building.

Wimbledon Common

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the funding base for the upkeep of Wimbledon common.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are considering a proposal from the conservators of the common that they become a special levying body under provisions in the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the joint report of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace called "Exposing the Faults: the Geological Case against Plans by Nirex to Dispose of Radioactive Waste".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not responded to the joint Friends of the Earth/Greenpeace report. Any proposal submitted by UK Nirex for the development of a deep repository for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste will have to satisfy the authorising Departments' assessment principles.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many studies regarding the geological formation of places which Nirex chose for the disposal of nuclear waste were carried out prior to such decisions; and who carried out the studies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In seeking to identify a preferred site for a radioactive waste repository, Nirex has followed the three-stage approach recommended by the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is outlined in Nirex's report to Government, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The report also lists the main contractors and consultants.

Bathing Water

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Bispham, *(b)* Cleveleys, *(c)* Fleetwood and *(d)* Heysham—Half Moon bay of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard: The North West water authority has proposed a scheme involving the construction of a long sea outfall to bring, inter alia, the five bathing waters at Blackpool including the waters at Bispham and Cleveleys into compliance with the EC bathing water directive by 1993 at a total cost of about £55 million. I understand that as a result of this scheme, the waters at Fleetwood are also expected to meet the directive's standards by the same date. The date of commencement for this scheme depends upon the Secretary of State's decision on whether to grant NWWA's applications for consent to discharge from the proposed long sea outfall.

The capital cost of providing, as an alternative, a sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall is estimated to be around £10 million higher than the proposed scheme, with additional running costs of around £1 million per annum. However, such a scheme is unlikely to enable all the identified bathing waters in the area to achieve the required EC standards.

Full details of the option of a sewage treatment works combined with a long sea outfall are not available, but I understand that the capital cost would be some £20 million to £30 million higher than the proposed scheme.

With regard to the bathing waters at Heysham—Half Moon bay, the North West water authority has been asked to draw up detailed plans to bring this, and other bathing waters in the north-west, up to EC standards by 1995. Until these plans have been fully assessed I am unable to give details of either the costs involved or compliance dates.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* Formby, *(b)* Ainsdale and *(c)* Southport of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall, (iii) full sewage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with EEC bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solutions will be put in place giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked the North West water authority to draw up detailed plans with a view to bringing their bathing waters up to EC standards by 1995. Until these plans have been fully assessed, I am unable to give details of either the costs or compliance dates involved for particular bathing waters.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the estimated cost for each of *(a)* St. Annes, *(b)* St. Annes north, *(c)* Blackpool south, *(d)* Blackpool central and *(e)* Blackpool north of (i) a long sea outfall, (ii) full sewerage treatment works with a short sea outfall and (iii) full sewerage treatment works with a long sea outfall to enable them to comply with European Economic Community bathing water directive 76/160/EEC; and when the appropriate solution will be put in place, giving the estimated date of commencement and completion.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The North West water authority has proposed a scheme involving the construction of a long sea outfall to bring, inter alia, the five bathing waters at Blackpool together with the waters at St. Annes North into compliance with the EC bathing water directive by 1993 at a total cost of about £55 million. The date of commencement for this scheme depends upon my right hon. Friend's decision on whether to grant NWWA's applications for consent to discharge from the proposed long sea outfall.

The capital cost of providing, as an alternative, a sewage treatment works with a short sea outfall is estimated to be about £10 million higher than the proposed scheme, with additional costs of about £1 million per annum. However, such a scheme is unlikely to enable all the identified bathing waters in the area to achieve the required EC standards.

Full details of the option of a sewage treatment works combined with a long sea outfall are not available, but I understand that the capital cost would be some £20 million to £30 million higher than the proposed scheme.

North West water authority has been asked to draw up detailed plans to bring the bathing waters at St. Anne's, and other non-complying bathing waters, up to EC standards by 1995. Until these plans have been fully assessed I cannot give details of the costs or compliance dates involved.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research projects undertaken for his Department by the Natural Environment Research Council during the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Domestic Property

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the market value of all domestic rated property in England and Wales, the rateable value of that property and the sums which will be raised by rates on that property in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: The latest information for England and Wales is as follows:

		£ billion
Market value of housing stock	31 December 1986	645·3
Rateable value of domestic property	1 April 1988	3·969
Rate income from domestic ratepayers in 1988-89		7·812

BISF Houses (Nottingham)

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in his discussions with building societies concerning the mortgageability of BISF houses in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Abbey National and Halifax building societies have confirmed to officials that their national lending policies make no distinction between BISF houses and those of traditional construction. They treat each house on its individual merits, lending on normal terms up to the societies' usual maximum loan, subject to condition, valuation, and status of the applicant. Where owners wish to carry out improvements, the societies will consider applications for re-mortgage in the normal way.

These national policies apply equally to properties in the Nottingham area. The societies have taken steps to remind surveyors, valuers and estate agents with whom they normally deal in Nottingham of those policies.

The societies have also pointed out that valuations of all kinds of property can easily be affected by misleading statements about safety and durability, and that some recent press and television coverage may not have had a helpful effect on the market.

I very much welcome the positive and public attitude taken by these two major building societies, which I believe reflects the position of other lending institutions, and I am

sure that owners of BISF houses will welcome this, and take to heart their advice on factors which could affect the operation of the market locally.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government are considering new steps for the protection of the ozone layer in line with the United Nations call for immediate urgent action.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said at the first meeting of the Montreal protocol parties in Helsinki last week it is time to "sharpen the teeth" of the protocol. During the review process which was started there, and building on the impetus provided by the London conference, we shall be pressing for a significant strengthening of the protocol. The European Community is calling for a reduction of production and consumption of CFCs by 85 per cent. as soon as possible with a view to their complete elimination by the end of the century.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make provision to reimburse Liverpool city council for special expenditure arising out of the events at Hillsborough on 15 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Normally, local authorities make some provision in their own budgets for extraordinary and unforeseeable costs.

Liverpool city council's officers have raised orally with the Department's regional office officials the possibility of the council's seeking special assistance. If the council was to seek such assistance, we should of course consider its request carefully.

English Heritage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many English Heritage properties which were, prior to the forming of English Heritage in 1984, open all day every day now have opening and closing times; and if he will list these, with their current opening and closing times.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department holds no records of opening hours at the various monuments for which English Heritage assumed responsibility on 1 April 1984. Details of opening hours since then are a matter for English Heritage.

Water Quality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, further to his reply of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *52*, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan, compliance with the European Community directive on water standards will be achieved within the timing given by the European Community.

Mr. Howard: We are fully committed to compliance with the EC drinking water directive as soon as practicable. However, water undertakers have recently submitted improvement programmes for supplies which occasionally fail to comply in all respects with the directive. These programmes are being assessed and it is not therefore possible at present to state how long it will take to comply fully with the directive. In due course the programmes will be presented to the European Commission.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Crown Suppliers continue to comply with established public procurement procedures and relevant EEC/GATT regulations.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenders the Crown Suppliers competed for in the past year; what was their estimated value; and how many it won.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* Information relating to tender bids by the Crown Suppliers is commercial in confidence.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of public money has so far been paid out to the management buy-out teams in the Crown Suppliers in order to help finance their bids; what is the specific uses for which the money has been claimed; and what is the maximum amount of subsidy he is prepared to pay to each team.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* We have agreed to help the management buy-out teams with the fees paid to their professional advisers, so that they are not at a disadvantage when compared with outside bidders. The contribution formulae provide for repayment if a team's bid is successful, a maximum Government contribution of £132,000 for the team which is interested in the whole business and of £36,000 for the team interested only in the transport operations. Each team is expected to make a substantial contribution to their own fees. Payment of £700 has been authorised to date.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 9 May 1989

THE ARTS

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since he last made an announcement on the subject to the House.

Mr. Luce: Since my announcement on 3 May at column *105* I am pleased to announce that a painting by Rubens has been accepted in lieu of tax. In accordance with the condition on which it was offered, the painting will be allocated to the Ashmolean museum, Oxford. It satisfied £169,852·48 tax and followed the precedent set by the acceptance of Picasso's "Weeping Woman", in that the Ashmolean agreed to pay the owner the difference (£180,147·52) between the tax liability to be satisfied and the "special price" of £350,000.

Tate Gallery

Sir David Price: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will arrange with the Property Services Agency that before the freehold of the Tate gallery is handed over to the trustees the fabric of the gallery is brought up to acceptable standards; and how much he estimates it will cost.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* Untying of the national museums and galleries from the Property Services Agency took effect from 1 April 1988. The progressive transfer of ownership of the buildings to the relevant trustee bodies is part of this process. The Government share the view of the institutions concerned that this allows the trustees to make more flexible and effective use of the resources available for the upkeep and improvement of the buildings.

I have also provided the national museums and galleries with substantial increases in their building and maintenance grant-in-aid over this period. The Tate gallery's provision of £2·4 million in 1988-89 was enhanced by a supplementary estimate of £0·8 million in that year; a further increase of 17 per cent. brings the figure for the current year to £3·8 million.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Treasury Stock

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people have purchased 2½ per cent. Treasury stock in each year since the stock was first issued; and how many holders of the stock sold their holdings in each year.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the levels of overseas investment of each of the Group of Seven countries in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 28 April 1989]:* Figures for the flow of net overseas investment in 1987 of all the countries in question, can be found in the February 1989 edition of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (VAT)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the anticipated costs of administering value added tax on liquefied petroleum gas in accordance with clause 20 of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* I regret that no estimate is available. However, the arrangements proposed in clause 20 of the Finance Bill were formulated after extensive consultations with representatives of fuel and power suppliers, and go as far as the Government are able within the terms of the judgment of the European Court of Justice to ease the administrative burden of operating the revised relief.

PRIME MINISTER

UNESCO

Q148. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether, in view of the change in the director generalship of UNESCO, Her Majesty's Government will now re-apply for membership of UNESCO.

The Prime Minister: We are following developments at UNESCO closely and hope that the director general can bring about the changes that are needed. Before we can consider reviewing our position on membership we will need to be convinced that fundamental reforms are being implemented both in UNESCO's administration and in its programmes. This will certainly not be possible until after UNESCO's general conference in November this year, which will adopt the organisation's new medium-term plan (1990-95) as well as its programme and budget (1990-91).

Wales (Visits)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the dates on which she has made official visits to Wales since 1979, indicating the location of each visit.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

17 to 18 July 1980—Anglesey
11 December 1980—Cardiff
2 July 1982—Mid Wales
21 September 1984—North East Wales
26 April 1985—North Wales
21 June 1986—Porthcawl
13 March 1987—Bangor and Penmaenbach tunnel

I have omitted from the above any dates on which I was solely engaged on party business.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 9 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was also present at Victoria station to mark the arrival of President Babangida. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I will attend a state banquet in honour of President Babangida.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo), 2 February 1989, *Official Report*, column *402*, how the clerical error to which he refers came about; whether the error has been notified to the safe works authorities; whether any other unreported errors have been made in plutonium accountancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have nothing to add to my reply of 2 February 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo). I re-emphasise that the underlying data were not affected in any way.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 17 January 1989, column *157*, in what form the unseparated plutonium was exported and to which country; from which reactors the 2,865 kg originated, and in what quantities from each reactor; and if he will update the table to March 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The unseparated plutonium was exported in the form of irradiated fuel. The precise quantities of separated plutonium exports linked to individual reactors cannot be disclosed on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. Figures of exports and imports of plutonium for the financial year 1988-89 will be included in the published data on plutonium production later in the year.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a comparative table showing the volumes and radioactive content of radioactive waste arisings per unit of energy output expected from *(a)* thermal nuclear reactors, *(b)* fast breeder nuclear reactors and *(c)* fusion nuclear reactors; and if he will ask United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. to prepare management and storage plans for radioactive waste from fusion power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the operators of the reactor types in question. I have asked the chairmen of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to write to the hon. Member about thermal nuclear reactors and fast breeder nuclear reactors respectively. The prospects for power from fusion reactors are so far distant that it is not practicable to make any such estimate.

UK Nirex Ltd. will provide facilities for the disposal of intermediate and low-level wastes arising from all sources, including any which may eventually arise from fusion power.

Coal Mines (Rescue Service)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what responsibilities his Department has for the provision of a rescue service for licensed coal mines.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This Department has no direct responsibilities for the provision of rescue services at licensed mines. The Coal and Other Mines (Fire and Rescue) Regulations 1956 require that the owner of a mine is responsible for ensuring provision for rescue is available. The Health and Safety Executive's mines and quarries inspectorate is responsible for ensuring the provisions of the 1956 regulations are complied with.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cyprus

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much public money has been committed to Cyprus by the British Government in the last 12 months for the benefit of *(a)* Turkish Cypriots and *(b)* Greek Cypriots; and for what purposes.

Mr. Chris Patten: The following commitments have been made to Cyprus in the last 12 months.

I *Overseas Development Administration Technical Co-operation Programme*
- (a) *Turkish Community:*—
  English Language Teacher Training in Turkish medium schools: £69,800 for the period 1988-91
  Book Presentation Programme: £4,000 for 1989-90
- (b) *Greek Community*
  Pedagogical Institute Teacher Training Project £103,000 for the period 1989-92
  Book Presentation Programme £6,000 for 1989-90
  Overseas Development Administration Technical Co-operation Training Programme
  £121,000 for 1989-90
  As I told the hon. Member on 1 March 1988, at column 502, the ratio of awards to Greek and Turkish Cypriots will vary from year to year, depending on the quality of the candidates coming forward and other factors. It is not possible to forecast at this stage the distribution of future awards.

II *FCO Scholarship and Award Scheme for 1988-89*
- (a) Turkish Candidates £81,217
- (b) Greek Candidates £37,413

III *FCO Fee Support Scheme for 1988-89*
- (a) Turkish Candidates £49,129
- (b) Greek Candidates £744,365

IV *British Council* (exchanges of persons, information activities, etc.) for 1989-90
- (a) Turkish beneficiaries £10,940
- (b) Greek beneficiaries £66,590

V *Home Office* (Anti-drug trafficking programmes for 1988-89)
- (a) *Turkish Community:*
  Training for Turkish Cypriot customs officers: £2,200

(b) *Greek Community:*
Provision of customs equipment: £8,300

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much public money has been committed to Cyprus by the European Community in the last 12 months for the benefit of *(a)* Turkish Cypriots and *(b)* Greek Cypriots; and for what purposes.

Mr. Chris Patten: The European Community allocated £29 million under the second five year financial protocol for Cyprus which expired last December. A further five-year financial protocol under which £41 million will be provided was agreed at the beginning of this year. The Community seeks to support projects of benefit to the whole population of the island; in particular, it has met the cost of water, electricity and sewerage works. No division of the sums committed for the benefit of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots is available.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much public money has been committed to Cyprus by the United Nations and its specialised agencies in the last 12 months for the benefit of *(a)* Turkish Cypriots and *(b)* Greek Cypriots; and for what purposes.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, total net official development assistance to Cyprus from the United Nations and its agencies was $7·62 million, or some £4·65 million. Detailed information on the precise destination and purpose of this assistance is not held centrally.

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government intend to continue the paying of public funds to the Greek Cypriots as aid, in view of the finding of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that by most criteria the southern sector of Cyprus is no longer eligible for economic aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: We regard it as important to make technical co-operation and other public funds available to both communities in Cyprus.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) when Mr. Sodigar Hussain applied to the post in Islamabad to join his wife, Mrs. Zaidah Begum, whose date of birth is 27 January 1967; and when a decision on his application will be taken;

(2) when Shamim Akhter, who was born on 12 November 1964, applied to the post in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom; when her application was refused; when the post dispatched an explanatory statement setting out the reasons her application was refused; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when Mr. Mchd Arif, who was born on 1 September 1963, will be issued with a visa by the post in Islamabad following his successful appeal against refusal to grant him permission to enter the United Kingdom;

(4) when Mrs. Musrat Begum, whose date of birth is 1 January 1958, applied to the post in Islamabad, to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and when a decision will be taken on her application.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available. A further reply will be sent to the hon. Member in due course.

South Africa

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence is now available of the use against the security forces in Northern Ireland of weapons obtained through the agency of South African intelligence personnel; and whether that evidence will affect in any way the policies of the Government towards South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave to questions on this matter in the House on 24 April at columns *660-65*.

It remains our policy towards South Africa to work for the abolition of apartheid and the peaceful transition to a non-racial representative system of government.

Gibraltar (Incident)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in the light of recent statements from Spanish police sources that the Provisional IRA active service unit was under surveillance until crossing into Gibraltar and that it was known that the unit was not armed or in possession of a bomb, what steps he is proposing to take to determine what information British or Gibraltarian security forces had in their possession when these members of the unit were shot.

Mr. Waldegrave: We received full and invaluable co-operation from the Spanish authorities throughout this affair for which we remain very grateful. The nature of that co-operation is covered in the statement made to the Gibraltar coroner's officer by the responsible Spanish police officer, a copy of which, together with its translation by the coroner's officer, I have placed in the Library of the House.

Neil Sanderson

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to request United Kingdom posts in Peru and Brazil to undertake inquiries about the whereabouts of Neil Sanderson; and what contact officials at United Kingdom posts have had with the Governments or other agencies in Peru and Brazil to obtain information about Neil Sanderson.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassies at Lima and Brasilia, Her Majesty's consulates-general at Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and the honorary consulates in Manaus, Belem and Recife were also alerted by consular department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in January this year, when Mr. Sanderson's father reported that his son was missing after setting off alone from Peru to canoe down the Amazon. None of the posts has had contact with Mr. Sanderson.

Our posts have informed the Brazilian federal and the Peruvian police of the situation but our posts do not have the staff resources to make searches for missing persons themselves. We have advised Mr. Sanserson's family to

contact their local police in Yorkshire in order to request a formal police investigation in South America, via Interpol.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards an agreement on banning chemical weapons.

Mr Waldegrave: Following the Paris conference on chemical weapons in January this year the chemical weapons negotiations in Geneva have had an active spring session which has just ended. Progress has been made on a number of issues, but much work remains to be done, especially on verification, before a comprehensive effectively verifiable and global convention on chemical weapons can be achieved.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals London Underground has made for the modernisation of the Northern line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground Ltd. is currently studying the options for modernising the Northern line but no proposals have yet been put to the Department.

Mr. John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals for the modernisation of the Central line of London Underground he has received; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Last October my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approved proposals to modernise and re-equip the Central line at a cost of over £700 million. New, faster trains will be introduced; the signalling will be replaced; and other improvements will be made. These changes will increase the line's capacity and reliability.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department has taken to respond to the proposals made in the 1983 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Civil Aviation Authority and national air traffic service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport monitored the actions taken by the Civil Aviation Authority in response to the 1983 report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and discussed the follow-up action at a number of meetings with the CAA on 29 March 1984 and 23 January 1985. Statements were made to the House of Commons in answers to written questions at columns *274* and *415* on the progress being made by the CAA. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport wrote to the incoming chairman of the CAA on 24 July 1986 setting out his objectives. These included action on several of the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the action the Civil Aviation Authority has taken to fulfil the recommendations made in the 1983 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Civil Aviation Authority and national air traffic service showing the dates on which specific actions were taken.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information given to the Secretary of State for Transport on the action taken by the Civil Aviation Authority to fulfil the recommendations made in the 1983 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the CAA and the national air traffic services is set out in the published CAA reports CAP 548 (February 1984) and CAP 499 (January 1985).

Rail Safety

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of his Department in seeking to ensure safety on British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Responsibility for safety of operation lies with the British Railways board. The Department's railway inspectorate has certain statutory functions, principally the inspection and approval of new works on behalf of my right hon. Friend, and the monitoring of standards required by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Both contribute to the overall maintenance of high safety standards.

Bypasses

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list (i) his Department's prediction at planning stage of the average daily traffic flow in the opening year for trunk road bypass schemes completed in 1986-87 and 1987-88 and (ii) the observed average daily traffic flow in the opening for those schemes in 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic is counted on all new trunk road schemes approximately one year after opening, to allow traffic patterns to settle down before the flow is measured. For bypass schemes opened in 1986-87, predicted and actual traffic in 1987-88 are given in the table.

Annual average daily traffic flow

Scheme	*Forecast*		*Traffic count*
	Low growth	*High growth*	
A52 Bingham bypass	9,400	10,000	10,500
A43 Bulwick bypass	5,000	5,300	5,700
A11 Barton Mills bypass	16,600	17,800	19,250
A12 Chelmsford bypass	—	[1]39,000	45,400
A31 Ferndown bypass	14,700	16,400	18,000
A54 Kelsall bypass	8,400	9,100	10,600
A57 Worksop bypass	10,300	12,800	9,800
A428 Bromham bypass	15,100	16,550	13,350
A10 Ely/Littleport bypass	5,000	5,400	6,800
A49 Tarporley bypass	6,700	7,300	9,800
A47 Billesdon bypass	5,850	6,300	9,200
A56 Accrington bypass	21,300	25,900	13,100

[1] Central forecast.

Those bypass schemes opened in 1987-88 for which data are available are listed below:

Scheme	Forecast Low Growth	Forecast High Growth	Traffic Count
A43 Towcester bypass	12,650	14,250	14,150
A10 Buntingford bypass	8,900	10,050	10,150
A43 Brackley bypass	8,450	9,500	11,400

The forecasts for the schemes listed above were done several years ago, mostly between 1980 and 1984. The forecast range reflects uncertainty about future income and fuel prices, which are the main factors influencing the national traffic growth forecasts. Other uncertainties arise from traffic modelling and other developments which occur between the time of the forecast and the traffic count. Traffic counts are also subject to a degree of uncertainty.

Channel Tunnel (Rail Link)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will put in the Library copies of any environmental impact, engineering, costing and any other reports on the proposed route for the Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Portillo: I have already arranged for copies of British Rail's published report and information pack on the rail link to be placed in the Library. BR will be carrying out an environmental assessment of the proposed route, in accordance with the requirements of the EC directive, and has undertaken to present an environmental statement to Parliament at the same time as it deposits a Private Bill. We will consider whether there are any further reports which it would be helpful to deposit in the Library in due course.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Research Institutes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by standard region the research institutes operated for or on behalf of his Department and the total employment thereat; if he will give for each region the total number of such institutes and the employment therein; and if he will express the regional totals as a percentage of the national totals.

Mr. Jackson: The details requested in respect of establishments of the research councils, as at 1 April 1989, are as follows:

	Numbers
North	
MRC	
Neurochemical Pathology Unit: Newcastle	29
External Scientific Staff	4
NERC	
British Geological Survey: Newcastle	12
Institute of Freshwater Ecology: Windermere	65
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology: Merlewood	48
Terrestrial and Freshwater Sciences: Merlewood, Newcastle	2
Total 6 Establishments (1·3 per cent.)	160
North West	
MRC	
External Scientific Staff	16
NERC	
Proudman Laboratory: Bidston	82
Scientific Services: Bidston	6
SERC	
Daresbury Laboratory: Warrington	552
Total 4 Establishments (5·4 per cent.)	656
Yorkshire and Humberside	
MRC	
Social and Applied Psychology Unit: Sheffield	34
External Scientific Staff	1
Total 2 Establishments (0·3 per cent.)	35
West Midlands	
AFRC	
Institute of Horticultural Research: Wellesbourne	183
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research: Cold Norton Farm	10
MRC	
External Scientific Staff	8
Total 3 Establishments (1·7 per cent.)	201
East Midlands	
MRC.	
Institute of Hearing Research: Nottingham	37
NERC.	
British Geological Survey: Nottingham	417
Scientific Services: Nottingham	21
Total—3 Establishments (3·9 per cent.)	475
South West	
AFRC.	
Institute for Grassland and Animal Production: Okehampton	36
Institute of Arable Crops Research: Long Ashton	251
Institute of Food Research: Bristol	214
MRC.	
Common Cold Unit: Salisbury	25
External Scientific Staff	10
NERC.	
British Geological Survey: Exeter, Hartland	12
Scientific Services: Swindon	36
Institute of Freshwater Ecology: Wareham	31
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology: Wareham	24
Plymouth Marine Laboratory	157
Scientific Services: Plymouth	6
Total—11 Establishments (6·6 per cent.)	802
East Anglia	
AFRC.	
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research: Cambridge	263
Institute of Plant Science Research: Cambridge	142
Institute of Plant Science Research: Norwich	186
Institute of Food Research: Norwich	300
Institute of Arable Crops Research: Bury St. Edmunds	46
Institute of Arable Crops Research: Cambridge	15
MRC.	
Development and Integration of Behaviour Unit: Cambridge	11
Laboratory of Molecular Biology: Cambridge	224
Molecular Genetics Unit: Cambridge	9
Molecular Immunopathology Unit: Cambridge	20
Molecular Neurobiology Unit: Cambridge	24
Dunn Nutrition Unit: Cambridge	77
Clinical Oncology and Radiotherapeutics Unit: Cambridge	37
Biostatistics Unit: Cambridge	13
Medical Cryobiology Group: Cambridge	10
Crystallography Section: Cambridge	1
External Scientific Staff	19
NERC.	
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology: Monkswood	67

	Numbers
Scientific Services: Monkswood	8
Sea Mammal Research Unit: Cambridge	14
British Antarctic Survey: Cambridge	421
Total—22 Establishments (16·6 per cent.)	2,028
South East	
AFRC.	
Institute for Animal Health: Compton	201
Institute for Animal Health: Pirbright	177
Institute of Arable Crops Research: Harpenden	474
Institute of Engineering Research: Bedford	217
Institute of Food Research: Reading	186
Institute of Grassland and Animal Production: Hurley/ Shinfield	311
Institute of Plant Science Research: Brighton	67
Institute of Horticultural Research: East Malling	253
Institute of Horticultural Research: Littlehampton	199
MRC.	
National Institute of Medical Research: London	528
Collaborative Research Centre: London	528
Clinical Research Centre: Harrow	424
Blood Group Unit: London	9
Cognitive Development Unit: London	15
Biochemical and Clinical Magnetic Resonance Unit: Oxford	9
Environmental Epidemiology Unit: Southampton	23
Child Psychiatry Unit: London	15
Cellular Immunology Unit: Oxford	16
Cell Mutation Unit: Brighton	16
Cyclotron Unit: London	124
Dental Research Unit: London	14
Epidemiology and Medical Care Unit: London	42
Human Biochemical Genetics Unit: London	24
Neuro-Otology Unit: London	12
Human Movement and Balance Unit: London	23
Leukemia Unit: London	11
Immunochemistry Unit: Oxford	14
Experimental Embryology and Teratology Unit: Carshalton	11
Molecular Haematology Unit: Oxford	15
Institute of Molecular Medicine: London	4
Mammalian Development Unit: London	15
Anatomical Neurobiology Unit: Oxford	13
Neurological Protheses Unit: London	7
Cell Biophysics Unit: London	25
Social Psychiatry Unit: London	20
Clinical Pharmacology Unit: Oxford	23
Toxicology Unit: Carshalton	142
External Scientific Staff	81
NERC.	
Institute of Virology and Microbiology: Oxford	64
Institute of Oceanographic Sciences Deacon Laboratory: Surrey	153
Scientific Services: Deacon Laboratory: Surrey	4
British Geological Survey: London	43
British Geological Survey: Wallingford	38
Institute of Hydrology: Wallingford	142
Scientific Services:	
Wallingford	15
Didcot	1
Reading	4
London	10
British Antarctic Survey: London	2
SERC.	
Rutherford Appleton Laboratory: Didcot	1,363
Royal Greenwich Observatory: Herstmonceux	173
Totals—51 Establishments (51·6 per cent.)	6,300
Scotland	
AFRC.	
Institute for Animal Health: Edinburgh	49
Institute for Grassland and Animal Production: Roslin	65
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research: Roslin	213
MRC.	
Blood Pressure Unit: Glasgow	40
Brain Metabolism Unit: Edinburgh	39
Epidemiological Studies in Psychiatry Unit: Edinburgh	14
Human Genetics Unit: Edinburgh	154
Medical Sociology Unit: Glasgow	26
External Scientific Staff	4
NERC.	
British Geological Survey:	
Eskdalemuir	3
Edinburgh	246
Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory: Oban	56
Marine Sciences: Stirling	4
Scientific Services:	
Edinburgh	9
East Kilbride	2
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology:	
Banchory	28
Edinburgh	55
Institute of Hydrology: Balquhidder	1
SERC.	
Royal Observatory: Edinburgh	118
Totals—19 Establishments (9·2 per cent.)	1,126
Wales	
AFRC.	
Institute for Grassland and Animal Production: Aberystwyth	204
MRC.	
Epidemiology Unit: Cardiff	24
External Scientific Staff	2
NERC.	
British Geological Survey: Aberystwyth	13
Institute of Hydrology: Plynlimon	6
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology: Bangor	26
Scientific Services:	
Barry	131
Bangor	
Totals—8 Establishments (3·4 per cent.)	409
Northern Ireland	
NERC.	
British Geological Survey	7
Totals—1 Establishment (0·0 per cent.)	7
Totals—130 Establishments	12,199

EC Marine Science and Technology Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the distribution across the EEC countries of the expressions of interest in the proposed EEC marine science and technology programme; whether Her Majesty's Government have approved this programme; and how the distribution of expressions of interest varies amongst EEC countries as between higher education institutes, research centres and industry.

Mr. Jackson: The Government agreed to a common position in March, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster reported to the House on 7 April, at columns 314-15. The Government expect to agree to the final adoption of this programme at the Community's Council of Ministers (Research) on 6 June. The approximate percentage distribution of expressions of

interest among the member states was estimated by the Commission for internal purposes in June 1988, when just over 1,000 had been received, as follows:

	per cent.
Belgium	4
Federal Republic of Germany	11
Denmark	3
Spain	6
France	22
Greece	5
Italy	9
Ireland	5
Netherlands	4
Portugal	3
United Kingdom	27
EFTA countries	1

The distribution between higher education institutes, research centres and industry for the whole European Community was estimated at 41, 37 and 22 per cent. respectively. The United Kingdom distribution has been estimated at 59, 21 and 20 per cent. respectively. The distribution for other individual states is not readily available and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. However, I have arranged for a copy of the full list to be placed in the Library of the House.

General Practice

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he intends to make any special provision to assist departments of general practice in universities.

Mr. Jackson: It is for each university to determine how the substantial public funds it receives, together with its other income, should be distributed between its faculties and departments. In the case of medical education, this normally follows discussion with the relevant health authorities.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what courses are planned to be available in technical colleges or colleges of advanced education to train general practice managers; and how many places are envisaged for these courses.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available centrally. It is for the institutions themselves to plan such courses taking into account demand for places.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health gave on 8 May at column *320* about arrangements to enable general practitioners to acquire necessary management skills.

University Intakes

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures are available to indicate the percentage of the intake to universities since 1959 who came from working-class homes.

Mr. Jackson: The percentage of home university students accepted through the Universities Central Council on Admissions, and who were from social groups IIIM, IV and V since 1977 are shown in the table. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Percentages of home acceptances through UCCA from social classes IIIM, IV, V

Year	Per cent.
1977	23
1978	23
1979	22
1980	19
1981	18
1982	18
1983	20
1984	20
1985	21
1986	21
1987	21
1988	20

British Independent Schools

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has given further consideration to the proposals for a grant scheme put forward by the Council of British Independent Schools in the European Communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend met representatives of COBISEC on 6 December. At the meeting he undertook to consider the proposals further on the basis of certain additional evidence which COBISEC was to provide. I understand that some of this additional evidence is still in preparation and we must await this before any decision can be taken.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns for 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 May 1989, c. 79-80]: The requested information about publicity campaigns has today been placed in the Library.

WALES

Schools (Books and Equipment)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) seconday schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall reply to the hon. Lady as soon as possible.

Tourism

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many projects have been identified in Wales as

suitable for European Community financing under the provisions of article 6 of the European Tourism Year 1990 decision document, adopted by the European Community Council on 21 December 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: None so far. A project submitted by the Wales tourist board was considered by the national examining committee on 4 May. I understand that the committee sought further information on the project and that it is intended that an expanded submission will be considered at the committee's June meeting.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department is making available specific grants for tourism operators in Wales to achieve the objectives of the European Tourism Year 1990 in line with the European Community Council decision of 21 December 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. However, the European Commission has decided to allocate approximately £3·3 million to the year. From this source, funds will be available for co-financing of projects by public and private bodies, for prizes and competitions and for information and publicity campaigns. Bids should be submitted to the United Kingdom's national examining committee via the British tourism authority.

Official Visits

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions since he became Secretary of State for Wales he has made official visits to Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since becoming Secretary of State for Wales I have fulfilled 301 official engagements in the Principality.

Dermatologists

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant dermatologists are attached to hospitals within the East Dyfed health authority and the West Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Grist: As at 30 September 1988 it is provisionally estimated that there were 0·9 whole-time equivalent consultant dermatologists employed by the East Dyfed health authority and 1·8 by the West Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average length of waiting time before a patient can see a consultant dermatologist after referral by a general practitioner at *(a)* Llanelli general hospital, *(b)* West Wales hospital, Carmarthen, *(c)* Morriston hospital and *(d)* Singleton hospital.

Mr. Grist: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The number of people waiting, as at 31 March 1988, for a first consultation with a dermatologist is shown in the table:—

Number who have been waiting for more than three months

	Total number	*Number waiting*
Llanelli General Hospital	154	74
West Wales Hospital	637	480
Morriston Hospital	73	60
Singleton Hospital	1,060	583

Development Board for Rural Wales

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to review the new town responsibilities of the Development Board for Rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Mid Wales Development Council and its successor body, the Development Board for Rural Wales, were charged with developing Newtown in Powys using new town powers. Population has risen consistently and is now close to the target level of 11,000. With the task of developing Newtown almost complete, I am reviewing the appropriate timetable for winding up the board's new town responsibilities consulting with the board and with the relevant local authorities as necessary. I expect to make a further announcement later this year.

Agriculture Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Agriculture Development and Advisory Service in Wales has succeeded during the past two years in achieving its revenue target; and whether the Transgoed laboratories reached their target contribution towards this revenue in the same period.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The Agriculture Development and Advisory Service has achieved the overall revenue target set in appropriations in aid for its advisory services in 1987-88 and, on the basis of provisional results, in 1988-89. All constituent units of the Agriculture Development and Advisory Service have contributed to this performance. It is not our policy to disclose details of individual Agriculture Development and Advisory Service units targets.

Pensioners

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many women over the age of 59 years and how many men over the age of 64 years are registered as resident within Wales, by county.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The latest estimates of population in the age groups requested are given in the table:

Population mid-1987

County	*Women aged 60 and over (thousands)*	*Men aged 65 and over (thousands)*
Clwyd	53·6	27·0
Dyfed	47·4	24·3
Gwent	53·3	27·4
Gwynedd	34·7	16·9
Mid Glamorgan	63·9	31·6
Powys	15·2	8·7
South Glamorgan	48·4	23·7
West Glamorgan	48·7	24·2
TOTAL FOR WALES	365·2	183·8

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Research Institutes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many research institutes are

supported by his Department; how many people they employ; how many of these are located in Wales; and how many are employed in those institutes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on 4 May, at columns *193-95*.

Rabbit Meat

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tons of rabbit meat were imported in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other members of the European Community from the People's Republic of China in 1988, 1987 and 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Imports in 1988 of meat and edible meat offal of rabbits and hares from the People's Republic of China are shown in the table. Corresponding data are not available for 1986 and 1987, when a different trade classification system applied.

	Tonnes
United Kingdom	2,125
France	6,595
Belgium and Luxembourg	657
Germany	724
Italy	640
Portugal	207
Spain	760
Greece	n/a

Source: Eurostat.

Pesticides

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many employees in his Department are engaged in testing vegetables for pesticide residue.

Mr. Ryder: At any one time, some 60 to 100 analysts in MAFF and other Government Departments are involved in analysing pesticide residues in the whole range of foods monitored by the working party on pesticide residues. The number engaged on testing vegetables within these figures will vary according to the nature of samples being analysed at any one time.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many pesticide ingredients are licensed to be used on food.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that the information requested is not readily available. Approvals issued under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986 relate to individual pesticide products, rather than active ingredients. These are listed in "Pesticides 1989" a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

"Salmonella in Eggs"

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Government will respond to the first report of the Agriculture Committee, "Salmonella in Eggs"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government welcome the Committee's lucid analysis of the extent and implications of the problem of salmonella in eggs. In particular the Government consider that the Committee's very thorough report has put the problem into the correct perspective by refuting the more extreme and alarmist impressions.

The Government also welcome the Committee's endorsement of our comprehensive campaign to control the disease and achieve the best possible standards in our egg industry. The response gives further details of measures, which we are taking to ensure the maximum possible degree of safety at every point in the chain from the poultry breeder to the kitchen table. Salmonella is a worldwide problem and no other country, to the best of our knowledge, has pursued such a vigorous campaign to combat it.

The Government are grateful to the Agriculture Committee for the valuable contribution its report has made towards this campaign.

Suckler Cow Premium

Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will pay the maximum rate of suckler cow premium following European Community decisions to increase the contribution from Community funds.

Mr. MacGregor: The beef reform package agreed by the Council of Agriculture Ministers in January included both an increase in the Community-funded element of the suckler cow premium from 25 ecus to 40 ecus and the continued option of paying a top-up of 25 ecus from national funds. In Northern Ireland the first 20 ecus of this top-up are also met from Community funds. More recently, as part of last month's price fixing, I negotiated a substantial devaluation of the green pound for beef which eliminated the monetary gap.

I am pleased to announce that the Government have decided to pay the maximum rate of national supplement to the suckler cow subsidy, taking full account of the recent devaluation and the scope provided by the scheme rules. As a result the rate of the suckler cow premium for the 1989-90 scheme year will be increased from £33·40 per cow to £47·43.

More beef producers than ever will benefit from the increased rate of premium because of a further change in the rules which in future will allow premium to be paid to farmers earning less than half their income from their holdings, provided they meet the other scheme rules. In particular, I would expect some crofters, farmers seeking to diversify, and those on low incomes to be able to benefit.

These changes to the suckler cow premium, which means a 42 per cent. increase in the rate, demonstrate the Government's commitment to the beef sector, especially the more extensive production of quality beef from specialist suckler herds. For several years now the specialist beef sector has shown good signs of recovery. Producers now have an added incentive to build on this recovery and take advantage of the more open competitive climate which results from the reformed beef regime.

EC Meetings

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The Agriculture Council met on 14 occasions in 1985, 11 in 1986, 13 in 1987 (including one held jointly with Economic and Finance Ministers) and 13 in 1988.

There were also occasional informal meetings of Agriculture Ministers. The Fisheries Council met on four occasions in 1985, five in 1986, two in 1987 and five in 1988. Also, at certain meetings of the Internal Market Council in 1988, a number of food items relevant to the single market were discussed. In addition there were numerous meetings of officials. Information on the number of such meetings could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Nitrate Leaching

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made on the preparation of proposals for the designation of areas sensitive to nitrate leaching.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government yesterday tabled amendments to the Water Bill to provide for the designation of nitrate-sensitive areas. Following my written reply to the House on 22 March I am pleased to announce that my Department and the Welsh Office Agricultural Department have today issued a joint consultation document entitled "Nitrate-Sensitive Areas Scheme". This has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and is available in the Vote Office. It is also being circulated widely to some 170 farming, water, environmental and other interested parties. The document takes account of Government statements on the principles underlying a scheme and sets out the detailed ideas as a basis for discussion. We look forward to receiving comments on the issues covered in the document from a wide range of organisations.

Undersea Rescue Services (Chemicals)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the dangers posed to undersea rescue services in attempts to recover the container of Lindane chemicals lost off the sunken Perintis freighter in March by the surplus conventional explosives and radioactive waste packages disposed of in the third deep trench at 49 degrees 50 minutes north, two degrees 18 minutes west in the 1950's.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The area in question was used by the United Kingdom for the disposal of surplus conventional munitions from 1946 until about 1971, and for the disposal of low grade radioactive waste from 1950 to 1963. The disposal site is publicised in Admiralty charts and in OECD Nuclear Energy Agency publications, both of which are readily available. The recovery of the container of Lindane, lost from the MV Perintis, is the responsibility of the French Government, who are aware of the presence of the disposal site and have made contact with my Department. The danger to any recovery operation posed by the radioactive waste is considered negligible. The presence of conventional explosives in the area should not prevent such an operation, provided that standard procedures for dealing with explosives are followed.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his answer of Friday 21 April, *Official Report*, column *347*, if he will consider extending the 1985 regulations to workers at the House of Commons.

Mr. Nicholls: The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 were made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. As I explained to the hon. Member on Monday 17 April at column *44*, the Act does not apply to the House of Commons and I do not intend to seek its extension to the House.

Under the arrangements for inspection of the Palace of Westminster and the parliamentary estate, the palace authorities would inform the Health and Safety Executive of major accidents, dangerous occurrences or diseases that occur at the palace. No such reports have been received by HSE since the arrangements were formalised.

Area Manpower Boards

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the possible and actual attendance, separately, for both private sector and trade union representatives on area manpower boards, for each area manpower board in Great Britain for the last full year that these boards were in operation.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is set out in the table.

Area Manpower Board	*Number of meetings*	*Attendance of trade union representatives*		*Attendance of private sector representatives*	
		Possible	*Actual*	*Possible*	*Actual*
1. Berkshire and Oxfordshire	6	25	15	32	16
2. Hampshire and Isle of Wight	9	33	23	42	25
3. Kent	12	60	31	60	26
4. Surrey	11	55	44	55	34
5. East And West Sussex	13	65	54	52	37
6. Buckinghamshire	8	24	19	32	13
7. Essex	7	33	16	42	31
8. Hertfordshire	6	18	16	30	12
9. London North	12	48	42	60	35
10. London South East	13	39	22	78	45
11. London South and West	11	55	37	55	32
12. London North East	11	56	24	48	27
13. Dorset and Somerset	12	60	36	60	32
14. Avon	12	60	28	60	24
15. Devon and Cornwall	11	44	26	44	25

Area Manpower Board	Number of meetings	Attendance of trade union representatives		Attendance of private sector representatives	
		Possible	Actual	Possible	Actual
16. Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	9	43	34	27	13
17. Birmingham and Solihull	11	49	31	52	32
18. Coventry and Warwickshire	7	35	23	42	33
19. Dudley and Sandwell	11	53	39	50	28
20. Hereford and Worcestershire	9	45	26	36	27
21. Shropshire	7	35	18	28	9
22. Staffordshire	4	20	19	20	14
23. Wolverhampton and Walsall	12	60	25	48	29
24. Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—
25. Norfolk and Suffolk	8	40	22	40	19
26. Derbyshire	8	40	30	32	16
27. Leicestershire	10	50	29	60	24
28. Lincolnshire	9	45	24	45	19
29. Northamptonshire	11	55	30	55	34
30. South Yorkshire	11	55	41	55	36
31. Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees	14	84	62	56	36
32. Leeds and Wakefield	13	65	34	65	32
33. North Yorkshire	12	60	34	60	23
34. Humberside	11	55	34	55	28
35. Merseyside	12	60	31	60	23
36. Manchester	12	84	54	60	31
37. Cheshire	10	50	14	52	25
38. Lancashire	12	52	16	52	29
39. Cumbria	8	32	23	32	15
40. North Tyne	6	34	14	36	25
41. Cleveland	12	60	35	60	43
42. Durham	12	60	41	72	42
43. South Tyne	12	60	53	96	55
44. Mid and South Glamorgan	9	45	29	36	15
45. Gwynedd	8	32	20	40	19
46. Dyfed and West Glamorgan	6	30	20	30	24
47. Clwyd and Powys	10	50	31	50	33
48. Gwent	9	45	27	45	21
49. Highlands and Islands	11	55	36	55	35
50. Grampian and Tayside	12	60	50	60	36
51. Central and Fife	10	50	17	50	26
52. Lothian and Borders	11	66	40	55	26
53. Glasgow	13	65	16	65	40
54. Lanarkshire	13	65	43	65	36
55. Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	12	60	31	60	30
56. Ayrshire	11	49	30	45	21
57. Dumfries and Galloway	12	57	38	60	24

ACAS

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals the Government have for reforming the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have no such proposals.

Employment Training

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have so far been accepted for training under the ET programme; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: By 28 April, 275,000 people had started on employment training. The cost for each trainee will be about £2,300. It is a remarkable achievement that so many people have been helped by the most successful training programme for adults ever run by the Government.

Vauxhall Motors (Luton)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the effect of the expansion of Vauxhall Motors Ltd. Luton plant on the local unemployment register.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to forecast what effect this investment will have on the rate of unemployment in the Watford and Luton travel-to-work area, but I am sure it will be welcomed locally and will help maintain jobs and prosperity in the area.

Industrial Action

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to repeal the current legislation on picketing and secondary action and to replace it with a voluntary code; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Green Paper "Removing Barriers to Employment", published on 20 March, contains the Government's current proposals for the further reform of industrial relations and trade union law. The Green Paper proposes no change to the law on picketing. It does however propose the removal of immunity for organising secondary action among workers of an employer not party to the trade dispute and the extension of the definition of secondary action so that it includes action by those who work under contracts "for services".

Labour Shortages

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department proposes in order to deal with anticipated shortages of skilled labour in future years.

Mr. Cope: Training and enterprise councils will offer employers major opportunities to meet their future skill needs, improve the supply of skills and promote enterprise. The whole range of my Department's Training Agency programmes already have these among their aims and will continue to pursue them vigorously.

Workfare Scheme

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans for setting up a pilot workfare scheme to study workfare systems in the United States of America and Sweden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 24 April 1989]:* We have no such plans. Our priority is to encourage unemployed people to take up the 600,000 to 700,000 existing vacancies.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what the community charge liability will be for a person who is having a reduction made in social security benefit in order to repay an overpayment of benefit received under section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986;

(2) what the community charge liability will be for a person disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit under sections 20(1)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) and sections 20(2)(a) and (b) of the Social Security Act 1975, and ineligible to receive income support under section 22(4)(c)(i) of the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;

(3) what the community charge liability will be for a person disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit under sections 20(1)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) and sections 20(2)(a) and (b) of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None of these reductions or disqualifications will affect the amount of community charge rebate a person receives, and so will not alter the amount of community charge he has to pay. When a person's net income is assessed for the purposes of determining a claim for community charge rebate, his gross income from prescribed benefits will be included, irrespective of any sums that may have been deducted from these benefits. A person who has been awarded income support will be entitled to the maximum community charge rebate of 80 per cent. irrespective of whether he may have been disqualified from unemployment, sickness or invalidity benefit, or may be having a reduction made from any benefit to which he is entitled.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime (Humberside)

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime in Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime reduction applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower and resources have been substantially increased, Crime Concern was launched with Government support in May 1988 to stimulate, support and develop local crime prevention activity and the largest ever national crime prevention publicity campaign was launched last year.

Total crime in Humberside fell by 4 per cent. in 1988. My right hon. Friend approved a further 20 police posts for the force from 1 April bringing the authorised establishment up to 1992. The Government encourage the growth and development of neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. There are now 1,331 watch schemes covering approximately 29,500 households throughout Humberside, with 15 panels and two junior panels. Hull is one of the areas in our Safer Cities programme.

Police (Misconduct)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inquiries instituted by his Department of a police force of one jurisdiction into the activities of a police force of another jurisdiction have found evidence of misconduct in the last 10 years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office has no power to institute inquiries of one police force by another into allegations of misconduct. The investigation of such allegations is a matter for the chief officer of the force concerned, subject to the provisions of part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 where a complaint is made by a member of the public.

Prior to the introduction of the 1984 Act, section 49 of the Police Act 1964 provided for the Secretary of State to direct a chief officer to request an officer from another force to conduct a complaints investigation. Figures relating to the number of occasions when this power was exercised, and the number of investigations which revealed evidence of misconduct, are not held centrally, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Broadcasting Directive

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent discussions in the European Community Council of Ministers on the draft broadcasting directive.

Mr. Renton: Under the Spanish presidency, the Council of Ministers (Internal Market) has had a series of meetings in order to identify a satisfactory way forward on the European Commission's proposal for a directive on broadcasting. These enabled the Council, on 13 April, to adopt a common position on the draft directive.

The original proposal from the Commission gave rise to a number of difficulties for us and other member states. We were concerned in particular at the proposals for formal

numerical quotas for European programme content, the provisions put forward on copyright and the potentially troubling extension of EC competence implicit in the proposals on protection of minors. More generally we argued that the Council of Europe was the right forum for the conclusion of a European regulatory instrument in relation to broadcasting, and we were therefore putting our weight behind efforts to conclude a European convention on transfrontier broadcasting under the aegis of the Council of Europe. These concerns were made clear when the House had the opportunity to debate the directive on 20 January 1987.

Since then, we have played a full part in the negotiations on the draft convention, the text of which was finalised in March. The United Kingdom signed the convention when it was opened for signature on 5 May. The convention substantially meets all the points on which we had reservations in relation to the draft directive, and is in our judgment an acceptable basis for European regulation. We therefore welcomed the decision of the European Council in Rhodes last December that the future work of the Community in relation to broadcasting should be based on that of the Council of Europe and that the directive should accordingly be adapted in the light of the convention. This alignment of the two instruments has been undertaken by the Internal Market Council. As a result a new draft of the directive has been produced which follows closely the approach of the convention. This has enabled us to withdraw our earlier objections to the substance of the directive.

I submitted to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 30 March an explanatory memorandum discussing in detail the specific modifications made by the Internal Market Council to the Commission's original proposal. The Committee subsequently recommended that a further debate be held on the draft directive. I regret that given the timing of the recommendation it was not practicable to arrange a further debate before the meeting of the Internal Market Council at which the common position was adopted. I have written to the Chairman of the Committee to explain the Government's approach to this matter.

We believe that the Council's common position represents a satisfactory outcome. We have successfully resisted the arguments of some members states for protectionist measures which would have imposed greater rstrictions on European broadcasters and have instead achieved a substantially deregulatory text fully in line with that of the Council of Europe convention. Our recent White Paper on Broadcasting made clear that these international instruments, when concluded, would contribute to the maintenance of programme standards throughout Europe, while removing the barriers which have hitherto inhabited the free flow of broadcasting services. They are consistent with the approach of the Government towards domestic broadcasting services in establishing an enabling regulatory framework to allow increased opportunities for broadcasters and viewers while ensuring the maintenance of programme standards on taste and decency.

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Gaelic Broadcasting

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make a statement on his Department's plans for the development of Gaelic Broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: We are considering this subject in the light of responses to the Government's White Paper on broadcasting.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Shoe Industry

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the shoe industry; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade met the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and representatives of the footwear industry in February 1988 to discuss footwear imports from the far east and south-east Asia. A number of other hon. Members have since made their concerns known. However, I can add nothing to previous answers to the House until the EC Commission reports the findings of its Communitywide investigation into imports of footwear from Taiwan and South Korea.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future ownership of the national engineering laboratory.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to announce his decision on the Touche Ross report on the future of the national engineering laboratory.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is currently considering a report on the national engineering laboratory prepared by management consultants Touche Ross and hopes to make an announcement shortly concerning the future of the laboratory, including ownership.

Vauxhall Motors

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he or his officials next expect to meet the management of Vauxhall Motors Ltd. to discuss changes in the pattern of purchasing of materials to the benefit of United Kingdom suppliers.

Mr. Atkins: My officials meet the company regularly to discuss a wide range of issues including component and material sourcing.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution was made from public funds to Vauxhall Motors Ltd's investment in 1988 in its Luton plant.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Company Investigations

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which accountancy firms have been criticised in the Department of Trade and Industry's inspectors' reports on investigations into companies in each of the past five years.

Mr. Maude: Two of the reports of inspectors appointed under the Companies Act that have been published since 1984 have contained criticisms of accountants. These were the reports of the investigations into the affairs of Milbury plc and into the affairs of The Greenbank Trust plc, both published in 1987 and in both of which the auditors of the company under investigation were the subject of criticisms by the inspectors.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was *(a)* the number of applications for regional selective assistance received between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989, *(b)* the number of applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out in that period for each of his Department's regions.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested in respect of regional selective assistance (RSA) industrial and training grants by region is as follows:

	North East	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	South West	West Midlands
(a) Number of applications received between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989	294	434	238	27	106	571
(b) Number of applications processed between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989	273	438	240	32	97	608
(c) Total grant paid (£ million) between 1 April 1988 and 31 March 1989	33·6	22·0	21·1	1·0	5·0	24·1

Regional Development Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was *(a)* the number of applications for regional development grants outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of applications processed, *(c)* the number of those applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out since 31 March 1988 to those applicants for each of his Department's regions.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested in respect of the revised regional development grant scheme by region is as follows:

	North-East	*North-West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South-West*
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	3,260	2,740	830	240	540
Number of these processed at end-April 1989	3,256	2,729	828	239	540
Number still outstanding end-April 1989	4	11	2	1	0
Grant paid (£ million) to date on applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	18·9	17·0	4·4	1·8	2·0

Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will give for each of his Department's regions *(a)* the total number of applications received for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) if he will give for each of his Department's regions *(a)* the total number of applications received for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* Regional enterprise grants (REGs) became available on 1 April 1988 in the development areas, and on 1 September 1988 in South Yorkshire. The information requested, for the English regions for which DTI is responsible, for the 12 months to 31 March 1989, is as follows:

Regional Enterprise Grants

	Number of applications	*Number of offers*	*Value of offers (£000)*
Investment[1]			
North East	424	274	1,517
North West	433	254	1,585
Yorkshire and Humberside	196	118	949
East Midlands	42	34	299
South West	146	98	432
Total England	1,241	778	4,782
Innovation[2]			
North East	136	55	1,021
North West	145	43	912
Yorkshire and Humberside	71	28	631
East Midlands	9	5	113
South West	35	13	218
Total England	396	144	2,895

[1] Payments of £712,379 have been made under Investment up to end March.

[2] Payments of £205,956 have been made under Innovation up to end March.

The amount of expenditure paid out in any particular region depends on demand for the scheme and the appraisal of individual applications. The value of grants actually paid so far reflects the nature and time scale of the projects on which applicants have sought grants since scheme commencement in April.

Total provision for expenditure on regional enterprise grants in England in 1988-89 as published in the Supply Estimates was £14 million. The provision for 1989-90 as published in the Supply Estimates are £22·2 million for investment grants and £5·9 million for innovation grants. Planned provision for regional enterprise grants in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £45·2 million and £46·3 million respectively. The actual expenditure in future years will, of course depend on demand.

ENVIRONMENT

Accommodation Costs (Cambridgeshire)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost per square foot of accommodation for civil servants in *(a)* the rural districts of Forest Heath, east Cambridgeshire and *(b)* the city of Cambridge.

Mr. Chope: There is limited office space available in the rural districts of Forest Heath and east Cambridgeshire. The annual rental cost is estimated at £4 per sq ft in Ely and £7 per sq ft in Newmarket depending on size, location and quality. For any new hirings in Cambridge the figure is estimated to be of the order of £15 per sq ft. The site at Brooklands is Crown freehold, but the market value is currently estimated at £7 per sq ft.

LDDC (Planning Permission)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all planning permissions given to the London docklands development corporation along the river Thames in the borough of Tower Hamlets which secure a public riverside walkway.

Mr. Trippier: A list of 45 permissions given by the LDDC since 1981, together with details of seven current cases, has been placed in the Library. These cases demonstrate the corporation's commitment to extensive riverside and dockside access.

Wartime Excavations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to record those wartime sites which were evacuated for sand excavation and subsequently infilled with rubble and waste.

Mr. Chope: The Department is currently undertaking a jointly funded project with the British Geological Survey of the solid and drift geology of almost all the built-up area of Stoke on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme. The project started in January 1988 and is planned to be completed by July 1990. Part of the output of the project will be a series of maps, on a number of different themes relevant to planning and development, including the incidence of made ground, categorised where possible by the type of fill material used.

This project is one of a series of geological mapping projects being undertaken in various parts of the country as part of the Department's research programme. The project aims to concentrate on areas of development pressure and to identify among other things, areas where planners and developers may need to pay particular attention to ground conditions.

Rents

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making to ensure that after April 1990 landlords will not be permitted to raise rents by continuing to charge tenants the amount which formerly covered rent and rates.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Protected tenants paying rents which include rates will have the normal protection of the Rent Act 1977 for tenancies entered into before 15 January 1989, and may register fair rents which are exclusive of rates. The Housing Act 1988 will apply to most tenancies entered into after that date, and any rents determined by the rent assessment committee under that Act will be exclusive of rates.

Nottingham City Council (Budget Returns)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply on 25 April to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) *Official Report*, column *532*, if he has received detailed budget returns from Nottingham city council.

Mr. Gummer: Yes, a return from Nottingham city council has been received. Returns from 21 authorities remain outstanding.

Toyota Plant

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the borrowing facilities for Derbyshire county council to enable it to provide the infrastructure for the establishment of the Toyota plant.

Mr. Gummer: Under the terms of the block borrowing approval issued for 1989-90, it is open to Derbyshire county council to borrow to finance infrastructure works undertaken in 1989-90. But the authority's total borrowing for the year must be contained within the ceiling established by that approval.

Radioactivity Study

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take following the publication by his Department of the report on the study of radioactivity three years after Chernobyl carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology; what part he intends aerial monitoring should play in future surveys; what role he intends local authorities should play; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology report on the radio activity in the environment has suggested that the radioactive caesium in organic litter layers under grass, bracken, heather and woodland could be an explanation of the longevity of radio activity in pasture and in grazing animals. A further programme of research is being planned to investigate this possibility.

Aerial monitoring is being considered as a means of rapid identification of areas of high radioactivity

deposition in the event of any future overseas nuclear accident. The role of local authorities is set out in the booklet "The National Reponse Plan and Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET) Phase 1" published by HMSO. Copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Fish Farming

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about fish farming in national parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* We have received representations from the chairman of the Exmoor national park committee and the chairman of the Association of County Councils' national parks committee. We are today issuing a consultation paper on permitted use rights in the countryside which includes an invitation for views on the adequacy of existing planning controls over fish farming in national parks.

Exmoor National Park

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Government response to issues raised during the recent visit to the Exmoor national park by the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* My noble Friend's visit to the Exmoor national park was informal and a wide range of issues were discussed. A "response" is not appropriate in the circumstances.

Football Supporters Association

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held with the Football Supporters Association since the Hillsborough tragedy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* I have not held any discussions with the Football Supporters Association since the Hillsborough tragedy, but I understand that Lord Justice Taylor has granted the association leave to be represented at the oral hearings which will form part of his inquiry into the tragedy.

Sick Building Syndrome

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of Government employees have been diagnosed as suffering from sick building syndrome during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* No Government employee has been diagnosed as having suffered from sick building syndrome because the nature of the conditions which are generally associated with this problem are such that they could originate from any number of different causes.

The cause of sick building syndrome is not known. The Government are participating in research which is currently being carried out.

Community Charge

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost to public funds of the Price Waterhouse report on the cost of administering and collecting the poll tax in England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. The cost of the report on the community charge to which the hon. Member presumably refers was £60,000.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities on the actual costs of introducing the community charge; and if he will consider the provision of additional finance *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* in 1990-91.

Mr. Gummer: We have received a number of representations from charging authorities on the costs of introducing the community charge. We believe that sufficient resources, both capital and revenue, have been made available by the Government for 1989-90. Collection costs in 1990-91 will be taken into account in assessing charging authorities' need to spend. We shall be discussing authorities' need to spend with the local authority associations before making proposals for the 1990-91 settlement.

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes to issue instructions to the Health Education Authority to bring to public attention evidence presented in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1989, 261(2), pp. 244-5, that passionate kissing favours the transmission of HIV.

Mr. Mellor: The article referred to in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* presents evidence to suggest that passionate kissing can produce microlesions in the mouth, which could, in theory, result in the transmission of HIV since any activity which could involve blood coming into contact with damaged tissue carries such a risk. However, there is no evidence, of anyone having become infected with HIV through passionate kissing. In developing AIDS educational material the HEA has regard to the latest medical and scientific knowledge, and is guided by the Government's expert advisory group on AIDS.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases there are of HIV being transmitted through mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Mr. Mellor: I am advised that no such cases have been reported anywhere in the world.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will make a statement on the steps being taken in the National Health Service to reduce the risk of health workers contracting HIV from their patients;

(2) how many health-care workers have caught HIV from their patients during the course of their National Health Service duties over the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The risks of health care workers contracting HIV from patients are extremely low. One case has been reported in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, in view of the serious consequences of HIV infection specific guidelines have been given to the health service on the steps which should be taken to minimise the risks of transmission of HIV. This guidance is currently under review by the expert advisory group on AIDS. In addition, much of the general control of infection guidance issued by the Department is relevant to the prevention of HIV transmission in the health care setting.

Osteoporosis

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what preventive action he is taking against osteoporosis.

Mr. Freeman: In conjunction with the Health Education authority we take every opportunity to encourage women to take regular exercise and to avoid smoking and excessive alcohol intake, all of which help to prevent osteoporosis. Hormone replacement therapy, which is available on the NHS, can be effective in preventing osteoporosis. Since there may be risks as well as benefits of such treatment for some people, the individual patient's suitability for HRT should be a matter for the clinical judgment of their doctor. The Medical Research Council has set up a specialist group to look at the further research required into osteoporosis and HRT. The National Osteoporosis Society has been awarded a grant of £20,000 a year for three years under the Department's grant aid programme and provides information and literature for the general public and for doctors on osteoporosis.

"Working For Patients"

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what effect paragraph 4.9 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on the manner in which regions can charge one another for cross-boundary flows in genito-urinary medicine without breaching patient confidentiality; and how paragraph 4.9 will affect health authorities in controlling their cross-boundary costs in direct access services such as GUM medicinal and family planning.

Mr. Mellor: We are currently considering with health service representatives the scope and operation of cross-charging arrangements and will have regard to the position of direct access services and the confidentiality requirements of genito-urinary medicine services.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he will make a statement as to the maintenance of genito-urinary medicine and venereal disease clinics as a core service in the light of paragraph 4.15 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555);

(2) if he will make a statement on the effect paragraph 4.15 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on the designation of health care for drug misusers as a core service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 7 February at column *640*.

AIDS-HIV Patient Treatment

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what effect paragraph 6.9 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on people with HIV infection seeking primary care from other Health Service sources such as GUM clinics, while remaining registered with a general practitioner;

(2) if he will make a statement on how paragraph 4.25 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will affect the application by person with AIDS for a referral to a centre other than the one with which the district health authority has a contract;

(3) if he will make a statement on how paragraph 7.15 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will affect the ability of general practitioners to use their drug budgets to pay for patients with HIV-related diseases;

(4) how paragraph 4.8 of "Working For Patients" will affect the additional costs of treating AIDS patients;

(5) if he will make a statement on the effect paragraph 6.5 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on the budgeting of practice staff costs for HIV and AIDS counselling services;

(6) if he will make a statement on the effect paragraph 6.4 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on general practitioners dealing with people with AIDS;

(7) if he will make a statement on the effect paragraph 4.15 of "Working For Patients" will have on the designation of AIDS care as a core service;

(8) if he will make a statement as to the application of paragraph 4.17 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) to the care of AIDS patients;

(9) if he will make a statement as to the effect of paragraph 2.13 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) on the training of receptionists in relation to people with HIV and AIDS;

(10) how paragraph 4.30 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will affect staff training and improved methods of care for people with AIDS where general hospital services are provided through National Health Service hospital trusts or private hospitals outside the control of health authorities;

(11) whether he will make a statement as to the effect of paragraph 2.8 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) on key HIV and AIDS care services;

(12) if he will make a statement as to the effect the renegotiating of services outlined in paragraph 4.13 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555) will have on the ability of people with AIDS to develop a relationship of trust and understanding with a particular centre.

Mr. Mellor: The aims of the proposals in "Working for Patients" are to improve services for patients, to extend patient choice, to delegate responsibility to where the services are provided, and to secure the best value for money. The aim of the implementation work now in hand is to ensure that the arrangements introduced meet the needs of all patients, including people with AIDS and HIV infection. That work includes detailed consideration of the account needing to be taken of HIV morbidity in deciding resource allocations; contractual arrangements to cover services which hospitals provide for people who have not been referred by their GPs; the account needing to be taken of the health needs of people with AIDS and other chronic illnesses in determining GPs' practice and prescribing budgets; and arrangements for the education and training of NHS staff and general practitioners in HIV-related matters.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the maximum cost of dental treatment has risen in cash and real terms between April 1979 and April 1989.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is set out in the table:

Maximum charge for a course of treatment in the general dental service

	£
April 1979	30·00
April 1989 (current prices)	150·00
April 1989 (1979-80 prices)	75·69

Nurses' and Midwives' Pay Review Body

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will place in the Library a copy of the Health Department's written evidence to the nurses' and midwives' pay review body on the new grading structure for nursing and midwifery education staff.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has done so today.

GPs (Retirement)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has made for introducing a retirement age for general medical practitioners and for abolishing 24-hour retirement without abatement of pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: As we made clear in "General Practice in the NHS: A New Contract", issued to all GPs in February, compulsory retirement for general medical practitioners aged 70 or over will be introduced from April 1991.

We intend to reduce the retirement age to 65 in due course, as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients". The arguments for doing so in terms of standards of service to patients are strong. However we are proceeding on a longer timetable for that proposal and our first objective is to introduce a compulsory retirement age of 70 for GPs.

"Promoting Better Health" made clear that similar provisions should apply to general dental practitioners. We will therefore introduce a retirement age of 65 on April 1997. This retirement age will be introduced in stages. That is, dental practitioners aged 72 or over on 1 April 1990 will have to retire on that date. The age of retirement will be reduced thereafter year by year after 1990 until it reaches 65 in 1997. We have negotiated with the General Dental Services committee compensation payments for those dentists who retire in the first three years of the scheme for loss in respect of the sale of goodwill of their practices.

Regulations on the compulsory retirement of GPs and dentists will be published as soon as possible.

Turning to 24-hour retirement, we will end from April 1990 the provision whereby a general medical or opthalmic medical practitioner, or dental practitioner, may on reaching 65 retire, draw his or her pension and return to practice after 24 hours without abatement of pension. This provision is wholly exceptional in the public sector. It was introduced to encourage elderly practitioners to remain in practice at a time when there was a shortage of young doctors and dentists. Now that there are adequate numbers of younger doctors and dentists the arrangement is no longer justified. The position of those practitioners who currently benefit under this provision will be protected.

Youth Treatment Centres

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the findings of the inspection of Glenthorne and St. Charles youth treatment centres carried out by his social services inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have today placed copies of the findings of the inspection, carried out by my social services inspectorate, in the Library of each House. This is the first such inspection of the youth treatment centres and I am grateful to the inspectorate for its thorough and detailed work. The Government fully accept their responsibility for ensuring that the special service provided by the centres for a group of youngsters with very severe problems is delivered as effectively and efficiently as possible. The inspectorate's report will be a great assistance in that task.

The inspection pointed to the urgent need for improvements to the fabric of the buildings, and action on this has already been set in hand. In considering the wider

recommendations relating to professional and management matters, the Government will wish to take account of the views of those directly involved in providing and using the youth treatment service. The findings are being made available to them and to others with an interest. I have also taken the opportunity to visit both centres to hear at first hand the views of staff and local management. Their task is a difficult one and I wish to applaud the commitment and dedication that they bring to it.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contribution is made to the study of social sciences in Scotland by the Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs; and whether he intends to give it support from the Scottish Education Department.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Educational Trust for United Nations and International Affairs produces materials which education authorities may choose to purchase for school use. The trust's aims and activities do not come within current priorities for grant to voluntary organisations.

Adult and Continuing Education

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there exists in Scotland a unit for the development of adult and continuing education; and what funding is available from Government sources for such services.

Mr. Rifkind: There is no direct equivalent to the unit for the development of adult and continuing education in Scotland. The Scottish Institute for Adult and Continuing Education aims to advance education amongst adult members of the community and to co-ordinate the efforts of organisations, institutions and individuals in attaining that aim. In 1988-89 the institute received funding of £34,000 from the Scottish Education Department and £46,000 from other Government Departments and public bodies.

Open Learning Centres

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what funding is available from Government sources for open learning centres for adults in inner cities in Scotland;

(2) if there is in Scotland an adult literacy and basic skills unit; and what funding is available from Government sources for adult basic education work in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The provision of adult basic education in Scotland is primarily the responsibility of the local authorities, who determine the extent and means of provision within the broad guidelines and resources provided by central Government.

The Government are making available £30,000 in both 1988-89 and 1989-90 to assist the establishment of an open learning centre at Whitfield, Dundee and £16,000 in both 1988-89 and 1989-90 to support the work of the Edinburgh walk-in numeracy centre. The Training Agency will be making £80,000 available towards the establishment of four open learning centres (including Whitfield) in 1989-90.

The former Scottish adult basic education unit was integrated with the Scottish Community Education Council in 1986. Adult basic education was accorded first priority by the council in its corporate plan for 1988-89 and approximately one third of Scottish Education Department grant of £550,000 to the council was directed to that subject.

The Scottish Education Department will in addition be making a further £100,000 available towards other adult basic education initiatives in 1989-90.

Ethnic Minority Adults

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to implement section 11 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 to provide for the settlement, welfare and education of ethnic minority adults.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to introduce specific grants to local authorities under section 11 of the 1966 Act.

REPLAN

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to introduce an equivalent of the REPLAN educational programme for unemployed adults which exists in England and Wales.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 April 1989.

Community Care

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, following National Health Service circular 1989 (Gen 5), which body is to take the lead role in community care; what is the future role of joint planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: National Health Service circular 1989(Gen)5 on the "Establishment of Community Care Facilities by Health Boards for People Being Discharged from Long-Stay Hospitals" made no changes to existing responsibilities for community care or joint planning. The Government are currently considering the future funding and organisation in light of Sir Roy Griffiths' report.

Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the working party preparing a code of practice based on the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 has met to consider responses received to the draft code; and whether a further draft code will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All comments on the draft code are being carefully considered but my right hon. and learned Friend has not felt it necessary to reconvene the working party. It is not currently the intention to publish a further draft before it is laid before Parliament.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has had on the draft code of practice circulated under section 119 of the Mental

Health (Scotland) Act 1984 for *(a)* health boards *(b)* local authorities, *(c)* voluntary organisations, *(d)* professional associations and *(e)* individuals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Category	*Number of responses*
Health boards	14
Local authorities	3
Voluntary organisations	4
Professional associations	15
Individuals	—
Others	4
Total	40

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had concerning guidance on provisions for guardianship contained in the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A number of representations about guidance on guardianship were received in the course of our consultations on a code of practice on the 1984 Act. These comments along with the other responses to the consultation exercise are still under consideration.

Incinerators

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the municipal incinerators in Scotland and indicate which ones are licensed to burn *(a)* radioactive waste, *(b)* special waste and *(c)* clinical waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Incinerators operated by local authorities in Scotland are listed in the table. Such incinerators operate under the conditions specified in a resolution passed by the disposal authority. These resolutions, which are required to be made available for public inspection, include such limitations on the incineration of controlled wastes as the authority considers to be necessary; controlled wastes include special and clinical wastes.

Under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 responsibility for the control of radioactive wastes rests with the Secretary of State for Scotland. The municipal incinerators authorised by him to burn radioactive waste are shown in the list below.

Incinerator and authority

Aberdeen (East Tullos)[1]—City of Aberdeen District Council
Alloa—Clackmannan District Council
Dundee (Baldovie)[1]—City of Dundee District Council
Govan—City of Glasgow District Council
Polmadie[1]—City of Glasgow District Council
Linwood—Renfrew District Council
Chinglebraes—Orkney Islands Council
Rova Head—Shetland Islands Council

[1] Authorised to burn low level radioactive wastes.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what regulations govern emissions from hospital incinerators; and if he has any plans to improve the operating standards of hospital incinerators;

(2) if he has any proposals to remove Crown immunity from hospital incinerators.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety (Emissions to Atmosphere) (Amendment) Regulations 1989 set emission standards for incinerators with a capacity of over 1 tonne per hour. These regulations apply to hospital incinerators but there is at present no Scottish hospital incinerator of the relevant size.

New controls on smaller incinerators will be introduced as soon as possible. It is intended that these controls will also apply to hospital incinerators.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources are available to and what are the staffing levels of Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate in Scotland; what proposals he has to extend the staffing establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate for Scotland is part of the Scottish Development Department and has a staff of 20 including 13 professionally qualified engineers and scientists. The inspectorate's complement is in line with its current commitments, but staffing levels are reviewed regularly.

Drinking Water

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent advice he has received on acceptable levels of lead in drinking water.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current medical advice is that there is little evidence to suggest that there are any health risks if the lead content in water is below the current European Commission maximum of 50 microgrammes per litre.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the most recent information available on levels of lead in drinking water in *(a)* Edinburgh and *(b)* Scotland; and what estimate he has as to when the levels will be reduced to within European Economic Community safety limits.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A recent survey of lead-plumbed properties in Edinburgh showed that the average lead level in tap water was less than 0·03 microgrammes per litre; it is estimated that not more than 15,000 people receive water which, on occasions, may exceed the maximum admissible concentration in the EC drinking water directive. Similar survey information is not available for the rest of Scotland. Six water authorities are completing programmes of treatment to reduce plumbosolvency and ensure compliance with the directive, as shown in the table:

Region	Number of supplies not meeting standard Now	At end of 1989	Estimated population affected ('000s) Now	At end of 1989
Dumfries and Galloway	22	None	65·0	None
Highland	9	None	7·5	None
Tayside	10	None	18·6	None
Grampian	14	None	31·2	None
Lothian	1	1	15·0	15·0
Strathclyde	22	16	73·0	37·0
TOTAL	78	17	210·3	52·0

Complete compliance should be achieved by Lothian early in 1991 while in Strathclyde all but two schemes will be completed by that date. The last two should be finished by 1992.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action is being taken to implement the European Economic Community directive on safe levels of lead in water; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the quality of water supplies lies with the water authorities, the regional and islands councils. They are introducing improved treatment to reduce plumbosolvency and are removing lead communication pipes in their ownership whenever there is an opportunity to do so. Enhanced capital allocations have been made available to local authorities to enable them to make faster progress with this work. Consumers are encouraged to replace that part of their lead piping leading to the kitchen tap by the availability of home improvement grant at an enhanced level for this purpose. These measures should ensure that the directive's limits are met.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the effectiveness of lime and orthophosphate in reducing levels of lead in pipes and in tanks.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The addition of both lime and orthophosphate to water which contains no significant amount of lead is aimed at reducing the plumbosolvency of the water; that is the ability to take up lead from lead plumbing, mainly in the ownership of consumers. Lime is generally effective, but some larger supply areas require further treatment using orthophosphate. Neither of these treatments affect the amount of lead available from lead pipes and tanks, they merely limit uptake.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the level of nitrate pollution in drinking water in *(a)* Edinburgh and *(b)* Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Public water supplies in Edinburgh are well within the nitrate limits set in the EC drinking water directive. Elsewhere in Scotland, no consumers receive from public supplies water with levels of nitrate above those in the directive. Local environmental health authorities will advise consumers on levels in private supplies and on any appropriate remedial action.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on levels of aluminium in drinking water in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fourteen public supplies in Scotland contain levels of aluminium from natural sources above the maximum admissible concentration (MAC) set in the EC drinking water directive. In each case the levels are well within those recommended by medical advisers as being acceptable and derogations have been granted as provided in article 9 of the directive. More than 69 supplies do not comply because of the presence of aluminium used in treatment. Most of these supplies are already the subject of improvement programmes in terms of article 20 of the directive. Some which exceed the MAC occasionally have yet to be fully assessed following recent reinterpretation of the status of the MAC.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on levels of trihalomethane in drinking water in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Detailed information on levels of trihalomethanes in drinking water is not held centrally. A national standard of 200 microgrammes per litre as an average over three months was set for Scotland in 1985 and all supplies comply with this limit. Consideration is currently being given to lowering the standard to 100 microgrammes per litre and to taking action to achieve this lower level in all supplies within a set period.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the extent to which drinking water in Scotland is deliberately dosed with aluminium compounds; and for what purpose.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Almost half of the water put into supply is treated in works where aluminium compounds are used to remove colour and suspended solids.

Pollution Control

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many staff in the Scottish Office are working on aspects of air and water pollution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A large number of Scottish Office staff have responsibilities which involve aspects of these subjects. In the divisions and units directly concerned with pollution matters, 58 staff are engaged full-time on these duties and 64 part-time. The majority of the full-time staff are engaged on environmental studies in the marine laboratory, Aberdeen; most of the remainder are located in the parts of the Scottish Development Department which deal with environmental pollution.

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the staffing levels in, and what resources are available to, the hazardous waste inspectorate in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Six professional staff are engaged for part of their time on hazardous waste inspectorate duties, amounting to the equivalent of two full-time officers. Staffing levels are currently being reviewed. The inspectorate can call on the resources of a wide spectrum of professional expertise available in the Scottish Office.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the sites in Scotland which are licensed to dispose of *(a)* radioactive waste, *(b)* special waste and *(c)* clinical waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sites currently approved by the Secretary of State for the disposal of low level radioactive waste in accordance with authorisations granted under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 are listed in the table.

Site	*Operator*
Black Devon Tip	Clackmannan District Council
Lower Polmaise Tip	Stirling District Council
Balbarton Tip	Kirkcaldy District Council
Ness Tip	City of Aberdeen District Council
Braehead Tip	City of Edinburgh District Council
East Saltoun Tip	East Lothian District Council
Birdston Tip	Strathkelvin District Council
Earnock Tip	East Kilbride District Council
Cathkin Tip	East Kilbride District Council
Kilgarth Tip	City of Glasgow District Council
Summerston Tip	City of Glasgow District Council
Riverside Tip	City of Dundee District Council
Longman Tip	Inverness District Council
Dalnacoulter Tip	Monklands District Council
Melville Wood Tip	North East Fife District Council

Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 the districts and islands councils in Scotland are the licensing authorities for controlled waste which includes special and clinical waste. Licences, and resolutions in the case of a council's own operation, are not necessarily written in terms of special or clinical wastes. The disposal facilities listed in the table can dispose of wastes which could be regarded as special wastes or clinical wastes respectively. Municipal incinerators are not included in the lists as they have been covered by my reply today to the hon. Member on that subject.

Sites which may accept 'special waste'

Site	*Authority Area*	*Material*
Central Region		
Kinneil Kerse Tip, Bo'ness Foreshore, Bo'ness	Falkirk DC	Asbestos and toxic industrial wastes
West Carron, Carron Road, Falkirk	Falkirk DC	Asbestos
Lower Polmaise, Fallin, Stirling	Stirling DC	Asbestos
Fife Region		
East Forthar Farm, Kingskettle, Ladybank	NE Fife DC	Dyestuffs waste
Grampian Region		
Little Clinterty, Clinterty, Aberdeen	City of Aberdeen DC	Some chemical wastes
Blackdog Farm (North). Bridge of Don	Gordon DC	Asbestos
Highland Region		
Council Site, Brackletter, Spean Bridge	Lochaber DC	Asbestos
Nontox Ltd., Ardersier (Incinerator)	Inverness DC	Tar, Pitch, Bitumen, Asphalts, Paint Wastes
Lothian Region		
Levenseat Landfill Ltd., Levenseat Quarry, Fauldhouse	West Lothian	Asbestos
Strathclyde Region		
Stevenston Works Tip, Stevenston	Cunninghame DC	Chemical industry wastes
Greenoakhill Tip, Hamilton Road, Broomhouse, Glasgow	City of Glasgow DC	Major site for toxic waste
Craignaught Quarry, Dunlop	Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	Asbestos
Lanarkshire Lagoons, Ravenscraig Works, Motherwell	Motherwell DC	Industrial sludges
Coke Ovens Area, Ravenscraig Works, Motherwell	Motherwell DC	Emergency disposal of coke manufacturing effluents into boreholes
Auchinlea North	Motherwell DC	Asbestos, paint wastes, industrial effluent treatment sludge, interceptor wastes, acid tars
Tweeniehills quarry, Kilarchan	Renfrew DC	Tanning wastes
Birdston, Kirkintilloch	Strathkelvin DC	Major site for toxic liquids and industrial wastes
Tayside Region		
Lochead Farm Landfill Site, Forfar	Angus DC	Asbestos
Leysmill Quarry, Leysmill, Arbroath	Angus DC	Asbestos
Leoch and Fallows Quarries, Rosemill, Dundee	City of Dundee DC	Asbestos
Wellbank Quarry, Wellbank, Dundee	City of Dundee DC	Asbestos
Luncarty Bleachfield, Luncarty, Perth	Perth and Kinross DC	Bleachworks residues
Shetland Islands		
Sullom Voe Terminal, Calback Ness, Shetland Islands	Shetland Islands Council	Oil contaminated soil

Sites which may accept clinical waste

Site	*Authority Area*	*Clinical Waste*
Component Authorised		
Kinneil Kerse Tip, Foreshore, Bo'ness	Falkirk DC	Veterinary wastes
Lochead Tip, Wellwood, Dunfermline	Dunfermline DC	Veterinary wastes
Melville Wood, Ladybank, Fife	North East Fife DC	Animal Carcasses (Prior Arrangement)
Westburn Lane, St. Andrew's, Fife (Incinerator)	North East Fife DC	Medical, surgical, veterinary wastes. Carcasses and flesh
Greenoakhill Tip, Glasgow, Strathclyde	City of Glasgow DC	Medical wastes

Hunterston A Power Station

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the nuclear installations inspectorate will publish the long-term safety review for Hunterston A power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate intends to publish this summer the findings on its assessment of the South of Scotland electricity board's long term safety review for Hunterston A power station.

Fish Landings

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total values of all fish landings in Scotland for each year from May 1979 to the last available figures for the current year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total values of all fish landings into Scotland by United Kingdom and foreign vessels since 1979 are:

Calendar year	*£ million*
1979	124
1980	115
1981	128
1982	149
1983	173
1984	197
1985	219
1986	238
1987	278
[1]1988	257
[2]1989	50

[1] Provisional.
[2] January-March.

Fishing Fleets

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total complement of the Scottish fishing fleets; what are the categories of vessels; how many fishermen are employed in the industry; and where are the home ports of the vessels.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the end of 1988 there were 8,711 fishermen employed in Scotland. The table shows the number of vessels in the Scottish fishing fleet at 31 December 1988 split by base district and by main method of fishing.

The number of active vessels in the Scottish fishing fleet at the end of 1988

	Number
(a) By base district	
Eyemouth	151
Pittenweem	117
Arbroath	87
Aberdeen	53
Peterhead	153
Fraserburgh	169
MacDuff	100
Buckie	116
Lossiemouth	119
Wick	99
Orkney	103
Shetland	124
Stornoway	210
Ullapool	59
Mallaig	210
Oban	125
Campbeltown	174
Ayr	128
Kinlochbervie	12
Lochinver	25
Total All	2,334
(b) By main method of fishing	
Demersal	
Trawl	423
Seine	251
Lines	63
Other	29
Total Demersal	766
Pelagic	
Purse Seine	46
Pelagic Trawl	6
Other	2
Total Pelagic	54
Shellfish	
Nephrops Trawl	466
Other Shellfish	1,068
Total Shellfish	1,514
TOTAL ALL METHODS	2,334

Fish Processing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the projects in the fish processing industry in Scotland which received European Community grant aid in the period May 1979 to May 1989 and the total value of grants given to each product.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table. Awards are made under the EC Processing and Marketing Regulation 355/77.

Year and title	*Grant awarded £*
1979	
Provision of fish freezing facilities at Whalsay, Shetland	25,285
Installation of equipment in a fish processing factory at Campbeltown, Argyll	55,875
Construction of a fish processing plant at Scalloway, Shetland	35,331
Installation of freezing facilities in a fish processing factory at Aberdeen	26,451
Installation of packaging equipment in a fish processing factory at Fraserburgh	44,221
Construction of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	160,173
Provision of additional equipment in a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	14,000
Construction of a fish market at Aberdeen	60,000
1980	
Improvement of a fish processing plant at Stornoway, Western Isles	65,468
Equipment of a fish processing plant at Buckie, Grampian	68,950
Construction of a fish processing plant at Inverbervie, Grampian	44,875
Construction of a fish processing plant at Fraserburgh	88,835
Construction of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	65,770
Improvement of a fish processing plant at Stonehaven	28,312
Construction of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	44,625
Construction of a fish processing plant at Wick	11,681
Expansion of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	68,750
1981	
Construction of a fish processing plant at Peterhead	6,380

Year and title	Grant awarded £
Extension of a fish market at Kinlochbervie	35,483
Equipment of a fish processing plant at Scalloway, Shetland	25,179
Provision of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	29,250
Improvement of a fish processing plant at Fraserburgh	63,157
Improvement of a fish processing plant at Annan	79,718
1982	
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	62,100
Construction of a fish market at Blackness Harbour, Scalloway, Shetland	48,417
Extension of a fish processing factory at Peterhead	34,178
Extension of a fish processing factory at Annan	53,642
Provision of fish processing facilities at Northmavine, Shetland	92,787
Provision of prawn processing facilities at Newton Stewart	68,999
1983	
Provision of additional fish processing facilities at Buckie	210,961
Improvement of a fish processing plant at Aberdeen	23,780
Expansion of a fish freezing plant at Aberdeen	34,097
New Factory for curing, smoking and freezing fish at Achiltibuie	17,874
Provision of fish processing facilities at Kyle of Lochalsh	15,585
Establishment of salmon processing plant at Inverness	80,720
Expansion of a fish processing factory at Inverbervie	100,000
1984	
Provision of a fish processing plant at Kirkwall, Orkney	121,848
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Mintlaw, Grampian	26,509
Installation of white fish processing equipment at a factory in Aberdeen	79,733
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Gairloch	53,213
Provision of additional fish processing equipment at Pittenweem, Fife	11,261
Extension of a fish processing factory at Scalloway, Shetland	10,237
Provision of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	74,460
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	165,000
Provision of fish freezing equipment at a factory at Aberdeen	7,500
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	48,250
1985	
Improvement of a fish processing factory at Peterhead	37,500
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	15,629
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	58,141
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Arbroath	56,529
Provision of additional fish processing equipment at Fraserburgh	117,450
Provision of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	141,212
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	20,875
Provision of fish processing facilities at Peterhead	22,650
Provision of fish processing facilities at Peterhead	38,105
Provision of fish processing facilities at Peterhead	19,830
Provision of fish chilling and freezing equipment at Kirkcudbright	30,500
Provision of fish processing equipment at Mintlaw, Grampian	15,790
Modernisation of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	36,609
Provision of trout processing facilities at Bellshill	30,002
Extension of fish processing facilities at Mid Yell, Shetland	15,451
Modernisation of facilities for processing fish offal at Aberdeen	159,955
Extension of fish processing facilities at Kirkwall, Orkney	7,334
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	17,000
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Boddam, Grampian	111,915
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Buckie, Grampian	92,991
Improvements to salmon processing facilities at Brydekirk, Dumfriesshire	118,372
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	23,000
Improvement of fish processing facilities at Peterhead	27,782
1986	
Improvement to fish processing facilities at Peterhead	26,511
Improvements to fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	56,468
Expansion of fish freezing and storage facilities at Campbeltown, Argyll	22,500
Provision of fish grading and packing equipment at Aberdeen	11,250
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	7,094
Provision of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	15,680
Provision of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	13,636
Extension of fish processing facilities at Boddam, Grampian	179,446
Provision of fish processing facilities at Mintlaw, Grampian	636,415
Provision of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	387,424
Provision of drying facilities for use in production of fishmeal at Aberdeen	109,422
Installation of thawing equipment for the fish sector at Fraserburgh	139,845
Provision of fish processing equipment at Shetland	31,295
1987	
Modernisation of processing facilities for white fish at Peterhead	8,509
Provision of processing facilities for pelagic fish at Peterhead	15,924
Construction of a fish feed factory at Invergordon	243,132
Provision of fish and shellfish processing plant at Motherwell	71,675
Installation of plant and machinery for the handling of fish at Peterhead	12,956
Expansion of fish processing facilities at Duns	71,221
Provision of fish market at Fraserburgh	107,300
Extension of existing fish processing facilities at Macduff, Grampian	7,989
Provision of a fish processing factory at Peterhead	58,559
Provision of fish processing equipment at Fraserburgh	25,944
Provision of blast freezer for fish at Fraserburgh	36,699
Modernisation of fish processing facilities at Brydekirk, Annan	70,064
Expansion of shellfish processing plant at Inverurie	58,750
Provision of fish and shelfish processing facilities at Invergordon	71,200
Provision of a fish marketing building at Kinlochbervie Harbour, Highland region	118,883
Provision of additional fish processing equipment at Fraserburgh	157,362
Provision of fish packing equipment at Aberdeen	46,110
Provision of additional fish processing capacity at Aberdeen	123,248
1988	
Provision of additional fish processing equipment at Lerwick, Shetland	52,521
Provision of additional fish processing capacity at Buckie, Grampian	44,266
Provision of fish processing equipment at Mintlaw, Grampian	96,830
Provision of additional fish processing facilities at Tullos, Aberdeen	40,641
Modernisation of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	253,206
Provision of a blast freezer for fish at Aberdeen	23,750
Provision of salmon processing facilities at Arbroath	51,648
Establishment of fish curing and smoking plant at Kirkwall, Orkney	93,809
Modernisation and expansion of fish processing facilities at Peterhead	68,578
Provision of a fish house in Aberdeen	11,310

Year and title	Grant awarded £
Provision of additional cold store capacity and fish processing machinery at Peterhead	30,113
Provision of fish processing facilities at Fraserburgh	91,734
Provision of fish grading, chilling and freezing facilities at Aberdeen	107,336
Provision of fish processing facilities at Aberdeen	113,384
114 projects—Total aid awarded	7,825,179

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many owners of Scottish fishing vessels received grant aid for the modernisation programme in the period May 1979 to May 1989; and what was the total value of these grants;

(2) what is the total value of grants aid given to the Scottish fishing industry in the period May 1979 to May 1989 for the building of new fishing vessels.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During the period in question £93,181,802 was awarded in grant aid. This figure is made up of £25,880,605 EC assistance, £15,571,812 assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board and £51,729,385 in national grants. The EC assistance figure of £25,880,605 comprise £19,619,574 towards the cost of the building of new fishing vessels and £6,261,031 towards the cost of modernisations. The breakdown of the national grant aid and the assistance from the Highlands and Islands Development Board is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Beef Premium

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total values of payments made to farmers in Scotland for the beef premium in the period from May 1979 to May 1989; and how much of this was funded from the European Community and how much from the central Government.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total payments made to farmers in Scotland for the beef variable premium from January 1979 to 2 April 1989 inclusive amount to £157·7 million. Of this total, £63·1 million was funded by the European Community and £94·6 million by the Government. This scheme was replaced by the beef special premium scheme on 3 April 1989, which is entirely funded by the Community. Payments under this scheme have just commenced.

Sheepmeat Regime

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the total values of payments made to farmers in Scotland for the sheepmeat regime since 1979; and how much of this was from the European Community and how much from central Government in the period May 1979 to May 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total payments made to farmers in Scotland from January 1979 to April 1989 inclusive for the fat sheep guarantee scheme, sheep annual premium and sheep variable premium scheme amount to £375 million. Of this total £367·5 million was funded by the European Community and £7·5 million by the Government.

Fishing (Loans)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of loans made to the Scottish fishing industry from the Sea Fish Industry Authority in the period May 1979 to May 1989; and how many vessels these loans cover.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total value of loans from the Sea Fish Industry Authority for the period May 1979 to May 1989 is £14,437,119. Information on the number of vessels assisted is not available as records relating to the earlier years have been destroyed.

Military Establishments

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated total value to the economy of Scotland of the presence of military establishments of United Kingdom armed forces in various locations in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible to provide comprehensive estimates. But details of the deployment of defence manpower in Scotland and estimates of defence equipment expenditure in Scotland are given in the table. There are no separate estimates of defence manpower expenditure in Scotland, although total United Kingdom defence expenditure on personnel in 1987-88 was £7,212 million.

	Scotland	Total United Kingdom
Defence manpower July 1988[1]	31,500	[2]461,100
Defence equipment expenditure[3] (£ million)	400	6,600

Source: Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989, Volume 2.

[1] Includes civilian and military manpower.

[2] Includes 97,800 personnel stationed overseas.

[3] This estimate is based on the location of the main supplier for each contract and does not take account of the location of sub-contractors.

Tourism

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total value of tourism in Scotland in each of the years from May 1979 to April 1989.

Mr. Lang: Figures for 1988 and 1989 are not yet available.

Domestic/Overseas Tourism Expenditure

	£ million Cash prices
1979	590
1980	659
1981	718
1982	760
1983	897
1984	1,423
1985	1,421
1986	1,576
1987	1,894

Source: Domestic: British Tourism Survey up to 1983, National Survey of Tourism in Scotland from 1983, Overseas: International Passenger Survey.

Harbours

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many harbour projects in Scotland have been carried out in the period from May 1979 to April 1989; where are the locations; how much money was granted to these projects; and what were the sources of the funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: From May 1979 to April 1989, the harbours listed in the table received grant from DAFS under section 2 of the Fisheries Act 1955, amounting to a total of £8,146,558

Fife
- Anstruther
- Crail
- Pittenweem

Grampian
- Aberdeen[1]
- Buckie
- Burghead
- Fraserburgh[1]
- Gourdon
- Lossiemouth
- Macduff
- Peterhead[1]
- Stonehaven
- Whitehills

Highland
- Keiss[1]
- Kinlochbervie[1]
- Lochinver
- Lybster
- Mallaig[1]
- Ullapool
- Wick

Lothians
- Port Seton

Orkney
- Trumland
- Westray

Shetland
- Blackness (Scalloway)[1]
- Cullivoe
- Lerwick
- Symbister[1]

Strathclyde
- Ayr
- Campbeltown[1]
- Gairloch[1]
- Girvan
- Oban
- Port Ellen
- Tarbert

Central
- Arbroath

Western Isles
- Stornoway[1]
- Uig

[1] During the same period, these harbours were also awarded grant from the European Regional Development Fund amounting to a total of £7,596,291.

The following harbours received grant only from the European regional development fund:
- Kylesku
- John o' Groats
- Carradale
- Gravir

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total budget for the Highlands and Islands Development Board for the years May 1979 to April 1989; how much central Government gave towards the budget; and how much was obtained from other sources.

Mr. Lang: The table sets out grant-in-aid from central Government to the Highlands and Islands Development Board, receipts from other sources and gross expenditure for the financial years 1979-80 to 1988-89.

Highlands and Islands development board
Expenditure 1979-80 to 1988-89 (£ million at outturn prices)

Year	Grant-in-aid	Receipts	Gross Expenditure
1979-80	17·4	3·9	21·3
1980-81	20·0	3·7	23·7
1981-82	22·9	4·4	27·3
1982-83	27·5	5·2	32·7
1983-84	31·3	6·8	38·1
1984-85	34·6	7·5	42·1
1985-86	30·4	9·2	39·6
1986-87	26·4	9·1	35·5
1987-88	26·2	11·7	37·9
1988-89	31·6	10·4	42·0

Agricultural Development Programmes

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many ADPs are operating in Scotland; where are the locations; what is the total value of grants made to farmers under these schemes; and what is the source of these funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is one agricultural development programme (ADP) operating in Scotland covering the islands off the north and west coasts but excluding the Western Isles which have recently benefited from an integrated development programme.

The programme provides for expenditure by the United Kingdom Government of £38 million (of which £27 million has already been committed) over a five-year period with reimbursement at the rate of 40 per cent. from the guidance section of the European agricultural guarantee and guidance fund.

Fishing (Aid)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much financial aid has been given to the fishing industry under the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund scheme since May 1979 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £25,800,605 has been awarded to the Scottish fishing industry for the construction and modernisation of fishing vessels.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grants have been given to members of the Scottish fishing industry under the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund scheme since May 1979 to May 1989; and how many new vessels were built with those grants.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 561, of which 196 were for the construction of new vessels.

Doctors and Dentists (Retirement)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has made for introducing a retirement age for general medical and dental practitioners and for abolishing 24-hour retirement without abatement of pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As we made clear in "General Practice in the NHS: A New Contract", issued to all Scottish GPs on 12 April, compulsory retirement for general medical practitioners aged 70 or over will be introduced from April 1991.

We intend to reduce the retirement age to 65 in due course, as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients". The arguments for doing so in terms of standards of services to patients are strong. However we are proceeding on a longer timetable for that proposal and our first objective is to introduce a compulsory retirement age of 70 for GPs.

"Promoting Better Health" made clear that similar provisions should apply to general dental practitioners. We will, therefore, introduce a retirement age of 65 on April 1997. This age will be introduced in stages. That is, dental practitioners aged 72 or over on 1 April 1990 will have to retire on that date. The age of retirement will be reduced thereafter year by year after 1990 until it reaches 65 in 1997. We have negotiated with the general dental services committee compensation payments for those dentists who retire in the first three years of the scheme for loss in respect of the sale of goodwill of their practices.

Regulations on the compulsory retirement of GPs and dentists will be published in the next few months.

Turning to 24-hour retirement, we will end from April 1990 the provision whereby a general medical or ophthalmic medical practitioner, or dental practitioner, may on reaching 65 retire, draw his or her pension and return to practice after 24 hours without abatement of pension. This provision is wholly exceptional in the public sector. It was introduced to encourage elderly practitioners to remain in practice at a time when there was a shortage of young doctors and dentists. Now that there are adequate numbers of younger doctors and dentists the arrangement is no longer justified. The position of those practitioners who currently benefit under this provision will be protected.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence is he has any further information about the dangers of radiation from nuclear tests.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is the function of the Government's independent advisors on radiological protection matters, the National Radiological Protection Board, to review all new information, including that on the test veterans, and advise the Government accordingly.

Submarines

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning incidents involving submarines and fishing vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I told the hon. Member on 11 April 1989 at column *515*, letters continue to be received from fishermen's organisations and from other interested groups about a number of incidents in which submarines are alleged to have been involved. The hon. Member himself raised this subject with the Royal Navy and the US Navy in Scotland yesterday during an all-party visit to Faslane and Holy Loch.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position regarding discussions between his Department, the port of Tilbury and Thurrock borough council regarding the use of the port of Tilbury by nuclear-powered Royal Navy submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) on 9 March at column *677*, my officials have had preliminary discussions with port and local authorities about visits to Tilbury by Royal Navy ships, including nuclear powered submarines. This remains the position. It would be premature to anticipate the outcome of these discussions at this stage.

44. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to update the Royal Navy's plans for evacuation and safety in the event of an accident to a nuclear submarine which involves an escape of radiation.

45. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to update the Royal Navy's plans for evacuation and safety in the event of an accident to a nuclear submarine which involves an escape of radiation.

49. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to update the Royal Navy's plans for evacuation and safety in the event of an accident to a nuclear submarine which involves an escape of radiation.

104. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to update the Royal Navy's plans for evacuation and safety in the event of an accident to a nuclear submarine which involves an escape of radiation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All aspects of planning for accidents in Royal navy nuclear-powered submarines are kept under constant review.

109. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents have there been during the past 10 years in which allegations have been made of submarines fouling fishing nets in the Irish sea; and in how many of these alleged incidents it has been substantiated that United Kingdom submarines have been involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1982, the date from which information is held, we are able to trace 35 cases in which Royal Navy submarines are alleged to have been in collision with fishing vessels or their gear in the Irish sea, Clyde approaches and north Channel. Six of these allegations were substantiated following investigation.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the nature and circumstances of navigational problems encountered by Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines at the port of Hull.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Entry by submarines into the port of Hull was complicated by the tides there. In 1983, a nuclear-powered submarine had to turn back at the point of entering Hull as a safe entry could not be guaranteed in the bad weather conditions at the time. In 1985, another nuclear-powered submarine was exposed to the risk of slight external damage while it was being guided into the port. In the light of these incidents, and the emphasis we place on the safety of nuclear-powered vessels, we reluctantly decided that the navigational risks of nuclear-powered submarines visiting Hull under these circumstances outweighed the benefits of such visits, even though Hull was popular with submarine crews and previous visits had been a great success.

RAF Upper Heyford

17. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations and representations he has received about future uses of RAF Upper Heyford.

21. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations and representations he has received about future uses of RAF Upper Heyford.

34. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation and representations he has received about future use of RAF Upper Heyford.

35. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation and representations he has received about future use of RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO has not yet taken decisions on restructuring its forces following the INF treaty; no are decisions imminent. In the meantime, the British Government have not agreed to any changes to the role of aircraft of the 20th tactical fighter wing based at RAF Upper Heyford, which forms an important part of NATO'S longer-range intermediate-range strike capability. My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the future use of the base from hon. Members and members of the public.

Nuclear Weapons

18. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's current proposals to modernise short-range nuclear forces.

24. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's current proposals to modernise short-range nuclear forces.

63. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's current proposals to modernise short-range nuclear forces.

74. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's current proposals to modernise short-range nuclear forces.

Mr. Younger: Along with their allies, the British Government believe that to support the strategy of flexible response NATO requires a mix of nuclear forces, including short-range systems, and that these need to be kept up to date and effective where necessary. However, specific proposals on modernisation are made by the appropriate NATO authorities, not by individual nations.

20. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the development, procurement and deployment of short-range attack missiles with a nuclear capability.

57. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the development, procurement and deployment of short-range attack missiles with a nuclear capability.

58. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the development, procurement and deployment of short-range attack missiles with a nuclear capability.

97. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the development, procurement and deployment of short-range attack missiles with a nuclear capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are currently considering the options for a possible delivery system for a replacement for the United Kingdom's theatre nuclear weapons, including a derivative of the American short-range attack missile II, the SRAM(T). The SRAM(T) has already been selected by the Pentagon as the basis for a United States nuclear stand-off missile programme.

28. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear air-launched weapons the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

60. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear air-launched weapons the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

68. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear air-launched weapons the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear air-launched weapons the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no evidence to indicate that the Warsaw pact has discontinued the use of any of its air-launched nuclear weapons since 1980. Indeed, there are signs that the variety of these weapons held by the Soviet air forces has been increased.

30. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from his Belgian counterpart about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

36. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from his Belgian counterpart about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

56. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from his Belgian counterpart about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham).

31. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear missiles the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

43. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear missiles the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

101. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear missiles the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We do not believe that the Warsaw pact has discontinued the use of any short-range missile systems during the 1980s. It retains a massive 16:1 superiority over NATO in short-range nuclear-capable missile launchers in Europe. The FROG-7 missile, with a range of 70 km has been replaces by the SS-21 missile, with a range of 120 km, in the forward area. We have no indication that the FROG-7s withdrawn have been destroyed. The SS-1 SCUD has been upgraded and remains in service with the Warsaw pact.

39. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the most recent proposals for new nuclear artillery shells.

50. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the most recent proposals for new nuclear artillery shells.

62. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the most recent proposals for new nuclear artillery shells.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

80. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what short-range nuclear artillery the Warsaw pact has discontinued operating during the 1980s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There is no evidence that Soviet artillery pieces capable of firing nuclear rounds have been removed from service in the 1980s. On the contrary, the Soviet Union has improved both quantitatively and qualitatively its nuclear-capable artillery with the introduction of new weapons systems: the 152mm 2S5, the long-range 203mm 2S7, and the 240mm 2S4 mortar. These new systems provide much greater mobility and firepower.

MOD Police

19. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the deployment of members of the Ministry of Defence police on land outside his Department's responsibility.

46. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the deployment of members of the Ministry of Defence police on land outside his Department's responsibility.

98. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the deployment of members of the Ministry of Defence police on land outside his Department's responsibility.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Armoured Vehicles

22. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what armoured vehicles have been ordered by his Department for the Army since 1979.

108. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what armoured vehicles have been ordered by his Department for the Army since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer which I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell).

Baghdad International Exhibition

23. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about defence sales arising from the Baghdad international exhibition.

25. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about defence sales arising from the Baghdad international exhibition.

99. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about defence sales arising from the Baghdad international exhibition.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about defence sales arising from the Baghdad international exhibition.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is too early to know if the exhibition gave rise to any defence sales prospects to Iraq or other countries. Any overseas sale would require an export licence and any for Iraq would be considered against the guidelines announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on 29 October 1985, at column *454*.

Chemical Weapons

27. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about development in the United States of new types of chemical weapons.

40. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about development in the United States of America of new types of chemical weapons.

42. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about development in the United States of America of new types of chemical weapons.

81. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about development in the United States of new types of chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with his United States counterpart on a wide range of defence issues. They last met at the nuclear planning group meeting in Brussels on 19 and 20 April.

Soviet Strategy (Maskirovka)

29. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence his Department has that the Soviets are continuing to practise deception known as maskirovka, as part of their general strategy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The concept of Maskirovka ("masking") is strongly emphasised in Soviet military writings, where it is held to have contributed to their successes in world war II. It embraces all concealment and deception techniques at every level from the strategic to the tactical. Maskirovka continues to be a key element in Soviet military doctrine and we have no evidence that its importance has diminished.

NATO

32. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received seeking the reduction of the United Kingdom's defence budget to the average North Atlantic Treaty Organisation level.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The United Kingdom's defence expenditure and the extent of our contribution to the Alliance is substantially above the NATO median. The United Kingdom's defence budget is planned to rise in real terms over the period to 1991-92 and taking into account the latest reported budgetary plans of the other members of the Alliance, the United Kingdom is likely to remain amongst the leading contributors.

67. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Secretary General of NATO; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to see Dr. Woerner at the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee next month. We shall discuss a wide range of subjects of mutual interest.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on *(a)* the failures and, *(b)* the successes, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation since 1959.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949, NATO has been outstandingly successful in keeping the peace in Europe during times of instability and rapid change in many parts of the world.

Malta

33. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his Maltese counterpart; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Younger: The Premier, Dr. Fenech-Adami, is the Minister with responsibility for the Maltese armed forces. We have held no substantive bilateral talks, although I met him during his visit to London last September.

Education Support

37. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training and education support is provided by his Department for Commonwealth and other friendly nations.

Mr. Neubert: Training and education support for Commonwealth and other friendly nations is provided by allocating places on United Kingdom service training courses to students from those countries and by sending service training teams overseas to assist our friends and allies in establishing their own training colleges and organisations in an effective and efficient way.

West Germany

38. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon his recent discussions with his West German counterpart.

77. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon his recent discussions with his West German counterpart.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes).

95. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the Secretary of State for Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Younger: I expect to meet Dr. Stoltenberg to discuss a range of matters of mutual defence interest, at the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee next month.

Force Levels

41. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the Army, the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy, and the Royal Marines are below their established strengths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Shortfalls in service manpower are measured by comparing adult trained strengths against trained manpower requirements. As at 31 March 1989, shortfalls were Royal Navy 1,380, Royal Marines 43, Army 3,006, Royal Air Force 2,797. In order to encourage greater efficiency in the use of manpower, policy decisions have been taken to aim manpower plans at levels a little below the full requirement. Not all of these shortfalls are, therefore, unplanned.

WEU Assembly

47. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends to address the Western European Union Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I shall be addressing the Western European Union Assembly on 4 June. This will provide a welcome opportunity to report on the achievements of the United Kingdom Presidency.

Lance Missile

48. **Mr. Brian Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is current NATO policy on the possible replacement of the Lance missile.

52. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is current NATO policy on the possible replacement of the Lance missile.

53. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is current NATO policy on the possible replacement of the Lance missile.

107. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is current NATO policy on the possible replacement of the Lance missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At their recent meeting in Brussels in the nuclear planning group, NATO Defence Ministers expressed their determination to maintain effective nuclear forces across the entire spectrum, including short-range missiles, and agreed that these forces must be kept up to date where necessary.

Z-berths

51. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the declaration of further civilian port facilities as Z-berths.

65. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the declaration of further civilian port facilities as Z-berths.

69. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the declaration of further civilian port facilities as Z-berths.

86. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy toward the declaration of further civilian port facilities as Z-berths.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy's requirements for port visits by nuclear-powered submarines are continually under review. When a port appears suitable and practicable, the safety considerations are discussed with local civilian authorities before a final decision is taken.

Frigates and Destroyers

54. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the procurement of frigates and destroyers for the Royal Navy.

59. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the procurement of frigates and destroyers for the Royal Navy.

71. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the procurement of frigates and destroyers for the Royal Navy.

79. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the procurement of frigates and destroyers for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government remain committed to maintain a force of about 50 destroyers and frigates and has plans for sufficient new orders to achieve this target. I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave on 28 April 1989 at column *686* of the *Official Report* for details of the recent invitation to tender for further type 23 frigates.

"Defence and the Environment"

55. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in implementing the proposals outlined in his Department's booklet, "Defence and the Environment."

Mr. Neubert: "Defence and the Environment" was published in 1987 as part of the Department's contribution to the European Year of the Environment. It did not contain any specific proposals, but described the extent of conservation activity on the defence estate. We continue to place a high priority on conservation in the management of our estate and the number of local conservation groups has continued to increase. In January 1988, we concluded a joint declaration of intent with the Nature Conservancy Council with which we enjoy a close working relationship.

Contracting Out

61. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the estimated annual saving made by his Department since 1979 in contracting out defence support services.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979 and up to March 1988, contracting out of defence support services, excluding the transfer of the royal dockyards to commercial management, has resulted in a net financial saving now running at some £50 million per annum and a reduction of over 13,000 mainly civilian public sector posts.

French Defence Minister

64. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends meeting the French Defence Minister; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Younger: I have no firm plans for an early meeting with M. Chevenement.

Guerrilla Warfare

66. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part guerrilla warfare has in his Department's plans for the defence of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what part guerrilla warfare has in his Department's plans for the defence of the United Kindom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. The defence of the United Kingdom is based upon our membership of the NATO Alliance and upon our possession, within the Alliance, of strong conventional forces and of a credible nuclear deterrent. By these means peace has been maintained within Europe for 40 years since the formation of NATO in 1949.

Low Flying

70. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now consider establishing an independent inquiry into the need for low flying.

Mr. Neubert: No.

88. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of low-flying sorties over

the Tynedale area in Northumberland in 1988; what is the estimated number for 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Central records are not held in a form which would enable the information requested for 1988 to be provided; nor is it possible to estimate the level of activity that the Tynedale area will see during 1989. I can assure my hon. Friend, however, that the Government will continue to do all within their power to minimise the disturbance caused by low-flying training and to spread this activity as widely and fairly as possible throughout the country.

NATO (Nuclear Planning)

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had recently with NATO Ministers about the modernisation of NATO's short-range nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

72. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent NATO nuclear planning group meeting.

76. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent NATO nuclear planning group meeting.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray).

NATO (Arms Levels)

73. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO allies about levels of *(a)* conventional arms, and *(b)* tactical nuclear forces, in Europe.

78. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO allies about levels of *(a)* conventional arms, and *(b)* tactical nuclear forces, in Europe.

87. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO allies about levels of *(a)* conventional arms and *(b)* tactical nuclear forces in Europe.

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies about levels of *(a)* conventional arms and *(b)* tactical nuclear forces in Europe.

Mr. Younger: I hold regular discussions with my NATO colleagues on a wide range of defence issues. We last met at the nuclear planning group on 19 and 20 April; and we shall be meeting again next month in the defence planning committee.

Plessey

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further assessment he has made in the light of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report of the implications for defence procurement of the GEC/Siemens bid for Plessey; and if he will make a statement.

75. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the defence implications of the GEC/Siemens bid for Plessey.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission concluded in its report that the bid for GEC and Siemens for Plessey could proceed provided certain undertakings were secured. The MOD's view of the implications of the bid were clearly stated in the MMC report. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry placed responsibility on the MOD to secure two of these undertakings. Discussions to this end are now in hand.

Ships (Orders)

82. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ships have been ordered by his Department for the Royal Navy since 1979.

90. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ships have been ordered by his Department for the Royal Navy since 1979.

91. **Mr David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ships have been ordered by his Department for the Royal Navy since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to table 5 of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates."

MARILYN

84. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what roles are envisaged for women in MARILYN, the study on future manpower policy.

Mr. Neubert: The MARILYN study recognised that the wider employment of women would assist in meeting the Army's manpower requirements.

Soviets Strategy (Afghanistan)

85. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has evidence that the Soviets have adapted their military thinking as a consequence of their experiences in Afghanistan.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The nine-year Soviet occupation of Afghanistan inevitably provided the Soviet Union with an extensive opportunity to learn practical lessons on the battlefield. The nature of the irregular warfare in Afghanistan forced the Soviet armed forces to adapt their traditional, heavily-mechanised tactics to suit local conditions and they recognised the requirement for greater flexibility in thought and action. Nevertheless, overall the lessons learned by the Soviets in Afghanistan have limited application in the NATO area.

Burden Sharing

89. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the latest United States plans for burden sharing will affect United Kingdom defence costs and commitments.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the latest United States plans for burden sharing will affect United Kingdom defence costs and commitments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay).

Trident

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the Trident testing programme.

92. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the Trident testing programme.

100. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the Trident testing programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: A series of 19 firings from a land-based launch pad was completed in January. 15 were complete successes, and one a partial success. The first test firing from a submarine on 21 March was terminated four seconds into the flight by the missile's self-destruct mechanism. The United States investigation into the cause of the failure has identified the need for modifications to the first stage thrust control system. It is planned to trial these modifications during the next submarine-launched test flight towards the end of July.

Nuclear Defence Establishments (Safety)

93. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated annual cost of securing Britain's nuclear defence establishments from infiltration by protest organisations.

Mr. Sainsbury: Security measures at Britain's defence nuclear establishments are designed to provide protection against a range of potential threats, principally espionage, sabotage, terrorism and subversion. However, it is not possible to identify that part of the total cost of protection which is attributable to the activity of protesters.

Tanks

94. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the relative vulnerability of tanks as a result of likely technological changes over the next 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The vulnerability of all our weapon systems, including tanks, is kept under review.

Sweden

96. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends visiting Sweden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I enjoyed a most successful and interesting visit to Sweden from 23 to 26 April. I saw the full range of the Swedish defence forces' impressive capabilities and had useful discussions on matters of mutual interest with Mr. Carlsson, the Defence Minister.

Exports

102. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the levels of export defence sales supported by DESO in 1988-89.

Mr. Sainsbury: The DESO continues to assist British companies market and sell their defence products overseas. It is through the sustained efforts of British industry, with the support of the DESO, that Britain maintains her position in the world as a major exporter of defence equipment. A broad overall view of United Kingdom successes is given in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989" which records that new contracts signed in 1988 are expected to be worth £3,500 million —a sign of the competitiveness of the British defence industry.

Nuclear-powered Naval Vessels (Accidents)

103. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the nature of the contacts between his Department and the relevant United States and Russian authorities in relation to co-operation in the event of accidents to nuclear-powered naval vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence would, where possible, lend whatever assistance was requested in the event of an accident involving a nuclear-powered naval vessel belonging to another country.

Warsaw Pact Operational Manoeuvre Groups

105. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the future of the Warsaw pact's operational manoeuvre groups.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no evidence that the Soviet Union has abandoned the deep strike element of its offensive doctrine. The concept of the operational manoeuvre group, which is to maintain the momentum of attack throughout the entire depth of its operational area, remains an integral part of that doctrine.

Soviet Air Force

106. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evidence he has that the Soviet air force has reduced its offensive capability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

Nimrod

110. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the location of the Nimrod AEW airframes and the use to which they are to be put.

Mr. Sainsbury: Three Nimrod AEW airframes have been broken up for spares to support the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft fleet. A fourth is a ground instructional aircraft at RAF Finningley. The remaining aircraft are currently at RAF Abingdon. Following careful consideration, we have concluded that there is no viable alternative use for five of these airframes, and they are now being used for spares to support the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft fleet. The future use of the last two airframes is still under consideration.

36 Engineer Regiment

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusion he has reached following the consideration of the possibility of redeploying 36 Engineer regiment from Maidstone.

Mr. Neubert: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has reviewed the possible deployment options for 36 Engineer Regiment. Having carefully considered the range of factors involved, he has concluded that the regiment should remain based at Maidstone.

Nuclear-powered Submarines

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the results of the environmental radiation monitoring which is carried out by his Department in connection with nuclear-powered submarine operation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Defence Radiological Protection Service will publish the results of environmental radiation monitoring carried out around nuclear-powered submarine berths in the United Kingdom, in the form of an annual report. With the agreement of the United States Government, results of monitoring carried out by the United States Navy in Holy Loch will also be included. The first published report, covering 1988 monitoring results, should be available in the summer of this year.

Arms Talks

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his counterparts in West Germany and other NATO countries about nuclear and conventional arms in recent weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray). We shall be discussing conventional defence matters at a meeting of the NATO defence planning committee in June.

United States of America (Defence Secretary)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the United States Defence Secretary.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to meet the United States Secretary for Defence at the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee next month.

Disarmament

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total number and explosive capacity, respectively, of all nuclear warheads removed from deployment, *(b)* the total number and description of all chemical weapons removed from deployment and *(c)* the total number of conventional weapons and descriptions of each type removed from deployment by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation since 1959; and whether the withdrawals were made by unilateral or multilateral decisions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Much of the information requested is not available in the detail and format required or is classified. However, I am able to offer the following comments:

(a) In 1979, NATO Defence Ministers agreed to reduce by 1,000 the number of nuclear warheads stockpiled in Europe, and in 1983 (at Montebello) agreed to reduce the stockpile by a further 1,400 warheads. These two actions brought the NATO nuclear stockpile in Europe to its lowest level since 1969. This level is being further reduced as warheads are removed in association with the implementation of the INF treaty.

(b) There are no chemical weapons declared to NATO. The United Kingdom abandoned its own chemical weapons capability in the late 1950s. The United States has only a limited retaliatory capability and has announced at the opening of the CFE talks in March 1989 that it would accelerate the withdrawal of its CW stocks from the Federal Republic of Germany, previously planned to be completed by 1992. Moreover, the United States has destroyed some 15 million pounds of chemical agent since 1970.

(c) We do not hold comprehensive information on all the past modernisation and disposal measures which have been carried out by our NATO allies.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the last sea dump of radioactive waste arising from military uses of nuclear materials took place; what was the total quantity of radioactivity contained in radioactive waste packages of military origin nuclear waste disposed of at sea; what volume of such radioactive waste has been disposed of at sea; and if there are any plans to renew the sea disposal of radioactive wastes arising from defence programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has not been the Government's practice to provide a detailed breakdown between civil and military sources of the drummed radioactive wastes disposed of at sea in the operations up to and including 1982. As required under the London dumping convention (LDC), global figures have been given to the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy informed the House on 26 May 1988 at column *233*, the Government have decided not to resume sea dumping of drummed radioactive wastes, but intend to keep open this option for large items arising from decommissioning operations.

Condor II Missile

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 17 March, column *379*, whether the Condor II ballistic missile under development by Argentina has the capacity to be fitted with nuclear warheads.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We cannot rule out the possibility that Condor II could be technically capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. We have, however, seen nothing to suggest that Argentina currently has a nuclear weapons programme.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any plutonium placed up to 1 April 1969 in the defence stockpile managed by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has since been used in a nuclear test explosion.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to comment on the nature or source of fissile material used in nuclear test explosions other than to say it has been material manufactured for defence purposes outside safeguards and free of end-use restrictions.

Military Bases

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will place in the Library, copies of all environmental impact statements prepared for the United States Congress to cover United Kingdom military bases leased to, or made available to, United States military forces based in the United Kingdom;

(2) what plans he has to initiate legislation to cover *(a)* the production of environmental impact statements to cover all United Kingdom military bases in the United Kingdom and abroad, and *(b)* the removal of Crown immunity from United Kingdom military bases.

Mr. Neubert: While the Town and Country Planning Acts do not apply to Crown development, the MOD follows the provisions of DOE circular 18/84, Welsh circular 23/88 and Scottish Development Department circular 21/84.

Similarly the requirement for environmental impact assessments is set out in DOE circular 15/88, Welsh Office circular 23/88 and Scottish Development Department circular 13/88. The MOD follows these provisions. No environmental impact assessments have been produced on behalf of United States forces based in the United Kingdom.

"Science and Mythology in the Making of Defence Policy"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of "Science and Mythology in the Making of Defence Policy", published in November 1988.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence library already has a copy.

"Pressure: How America Runs NATO"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of, "Pressure: How America Runs NATO", published in March.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence library ordered a copy before the publication date, and is presently awaiting delivery.

Defence Policy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the failures of implementation of Her Majesty's Government's defence policy since May 1979; and if he will make a statement on why policy failures have occurred.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This Government have been successful in implementing their defence policy.

Research Contracts

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research contracts or agreements in universities or other institutions of higher education, which are currently being funded by his Department, are in each classification of secrecy.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD has currently 757 agreements and 96 contracts with United Kingdom universities and other higher education institutions. Four agreements and one contract are classified confidential; the remainder of the agreements and contracts are unclassified.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts and agreements have existed in the past five years between his Department and universities and other institutions of higher education for research related to the verification of arms control treaties by seismology; from which Ministry of Defence research establishment contracts or agreements originated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her on 24 February at column *847*.

US Military Forces

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the value to the Scottish economy of United States based military forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We estimate that the overall economic impact of United States military forces based in the United Kingdom is about £700 million for 1988, but no separate assessment has been made for Scotland.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on resolving the choice of radars for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom and our EFA partners are in the process of evaluating the merits of the competing tenders. A decision will be reached at the earliest opportunity.

Defence Procurement

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further steps he is taking to improve the process of defence procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Efforts to improve the process of defence procurement, aimed at achieving better value for money, will continue unabated. We shall continue to stress the importance of competition and a more commercial approach to contracting, and we will continue to encourage the widest possible range of companies to compete for our business. In particular, the new suppliers service, launched in November 1988 to extend the range of the highly successful work of the small firms advice division, encourages new suppliers of any size and background to bring their products and services to the attention of the MOD.

We are continuing to implement the recommendations of the Jordan/Lee/Cawsey report "Learning From Experience" including those concerning a fully professional approach to project management.

We are encouraging our allies, through the NATO conference of national armamaments directors (CNAD), also to adopt a more commercial approach to defence

procurement. Within Europe, we wholeheartedly support the work of the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG), which we currently chair, which aims to promote a more open market in defence goods.

Dog Training

83. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made with his review of dog training at the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray.

Mr. Neubert: It is hoped that consideration of the consultant's recommendation may be completed in June.

Contracts (Competitive Tender)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what improvements in efficiency have been achieved since his Department adopted a policy of increasing the number of contracts subject to competitive tender.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 April 1989]:* The increased use of competitive tendering is at the heart of the MOD's more commercial approach to defence procurement. This approach continues to bring substantial cash savings, and to encourage better quality and more timely delivery of equipment. It also continues to promote improvements in the efficiency and competitiveness of the British defence industry, contributing to its recent export successes, and its position as the world's third largest defence exporter.

The use of competitive tendering for defence services, since 1979, has led to a net financial saving now running at some £50 million a year, has improved efficiency and has permitted service manpower to be redeployed to front-line tasks. Large savings have been made in areas such as cleaning, catering, grounds maintenance and security guarding, but contractors also manage many other support activities and facilities for the services, including the royal dockyards. More details are given on page 35 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989".

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 10 May 1989

SCOTLAND

Electricity Privatisation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what volume of radioactive wastes in the categories of *(a)* low level, *(b)* intermediate level and *(c)* high level, respectively, will be transferred to the ownership of Scottish Nuclear Limited under privatisation of the South of Scotland electricity board; and what volume of unreprocessed spent nuclear fuel and reprocessed plutonium will be transferred to Scottish Nuclear Limited on its creation.

Mr. Lang: The Government's intention is that Scottish Nuclear Limited should inherit all the SSEB's nuclear assets and liabilities.

AIDS

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of each of the advertising agencies used by his Department on the AIDS campaign, with the payments made to each.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department does not employ advertising agencies for the AIDS campaign.

Buses (Privatisation)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the fleet size and market share of the individual local authority bus public limited companies in Scotland;

(2) what are the numbers and types of public service vehicles which are in service with local authority public limited companies in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The numbers and types of public service vehicles in service with local authority owned bus undertakings in Scotland are shown in the following table. Information on the market share of the individual companies is not available.

	Strathclyde Buses Ltd.	*Lothian Region Transport plc*	*Tayside Public Transport Company Ltd.*
Double deckers	757	524	141
Single deckers	10	29	4
Coaches	13	21	12
Midibuses	44	4	—
Minibuses	16	—	4
Open top buses	3	2	—
All buses	843	580	161

Source: "Who's Who in the Bus Industry", 1989-90 Edition, published by Yandell Publishing Ltd.

New Businesses

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many firms have set up new businesses in Scotland in the period May 1979 to April 1989; what type of businesses they were; how many jobs were created; and where those firms were located.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Between 1 January 1980 and 1 January 1989, the number of companies registered in Scotland rose by just under 20,000, or by more than one half.

Information on jobs created from new openings is available only for the manufacturing sector. The definition used includes existing plants rising above the employment threshold of 11 and also includes in some cases existing businesses changing address or expansions to new sites.

One thousand, three hundred and eighty-five manufacturing plants opened in Scotland between 1979 and 1987, and 994 were still open at the end of 1987 with a total employment of 44,001. Tables 1 and 2 show the industry breakdown and the local authority breakdown of these plants. Figures for the period after 1987 are not yet available.

Table 1

Local authority region	*Number of manufacturing plants opened January 1979 to [1]December 1987*	*[2]1987 Employment*
Borders	37	1,115
Central	64	2,072
Dumfries and Galloway	27	972
Fife	106	3,578
Grampian	107	3,633
Highland, Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles	43	818
Lothian	171	7,084
Strathclyde	703	20,779
Tayside	127	3,950
Total Scotland	1,385	44,001

Source: Regional Data System.

Notes:

[1] This figure includes plants closing prior to December 1987.

[2] Employment relates to 1987 or latest known employment if 1987 not available; figures are given for plants open at December 1987.

Table 2

1980 Standard Industrial Classification	*(1) Number of manufacturing plants opened in Scotland January 1979 to December 1987[1]*	*(2) 1987 employment[2]*
Metal Manufacture (Classes 21-22)	30	912
Other Minerals and Mineral Products (Classes 23-24)	70	1,637
Chemicals and Man-made Fibres (Classes 25-26)	40	1,439
Engineering and Allied Industries (Classes 31-37)	585	19,152
Food, Drink and Tobacco Industries (Classes 41-42)	180	6,558
Textiles, Footwear, Leather and Clothing (Classes 43-45)	191	7,137
Other Manufacturing (Classes 46-49)	289	7,166
Total Manufacturing	1,385	44,001

Source: Regional Data System.
Notes:
1. This figure includes plants closing prior to December 1987.
2. Employment relates to 1987 or latest known employment if 1987 not available; figures are given for plants open at December 1987.

TRANSPORT

M6 (Road Works)

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why, during the recent bank holiday weekend, only one lane of the M6 northbound was open between junctions 16 and 17; how long it was closed prior to that weekend; when the present contraflow was set up increasing the number of lanes open in both directions to two; and whether he will ensure that where possible road works do not take place over bank holidays unless absolutely necessary and that, when such occasions arise, at least two lanes are open.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One-lane working on the northbound carriageway was necessary from 9 pm to midnight on Sunday 30 April to set up the amended contraflow. Otherwise, two lanes have been available in both directions except when the contraflow system on the southbound carriageway was installed at the start of the contract on 15 April. We shall whenever possible ensure that road works do not take place at bank holidays, particularly on major holiday routes. If work has to be done, we shall keep as much road space open as possible.

Motor Cyclists (Safety)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to improve the safety of new motor cycle riders in the first six months of their riding career.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Sales of motor cycles below 125 cc in the first four months of this year were 15 per cent. higher than during the same period in 1988.

We welcome this change in the fortunes of the motor cycle industry. Unfortunately, only about 30 per cent. of new riders at present undergo any form of training.

Today, the motor cycle industry launched 'bike fax': a personal organiser to be given free to all new provisional motor cycle licence holders by motor cycle dealers. This will help to establish motor cycle dealers as new rider information centres.

'Bike fax' seeks to influence the would-be biker to choose the right bike, to take proper training, to develop the skills to survive the high-risk early months and to dress suitably and conspicuously.

Although the Department of Transport has assisted in its production, 'bike fax' is funded entirely by the industry.

Manufacturers and dealers support fully our proposals to introduce compulsory basic training for new riders from mid-1990.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Programme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much is being spent in the parliamentary constituency of Don Valley under the urban programme; on what schemes it is being spent; and if he will list the percentage of the budget that is allocated for *(a)* publicity, *(b)* information and *(c)* public relations.

Mr. Trippier: During 1988-89, schemes totalling £932,944 were approved in Don Valley under the urban programme. These were:

Mexborough Industrial Improvement Area Schemes
Mexborough Grammar School Conversion
Mexborough Resource Centre
Conisbrough Castle Interpretative Centre
Mexborough Under-fives Resource Centre
Mexborough Publicity

Schemes approved for start in 1989-90 in Don Valley currently total £245,070. These were:

Mexborough Industrial Improvement Area Schemes
Balby Street School, Conisbrough, Environmental Works
Clayfield Court, Mexborough
Crags Road Flats, Denaby Main
First Interpreters
Highwoods Crescent, Mexborough
Landscaping of Dumpit Sites
Maple Leaf Court, Mexborough
Mexborough Resource Centre
Mexborough Under-fives Resource Centre
Shepherds Close, Denaby Main
Wellgate Flats, Conisbrough

However it is up to Doncaster metropolitan borough council to determine scheme and spending priority within its total UP resources which stood at £1·75 million in 1988-89 and are £1·795 million for 1989-90. Actual spending figures for 1988-89 have not yet been received and figures for 1989-90 will not be available until after the end of the financial year.

There is no allocated budget for publicity, information or public relations. A one-off grant of £3,000 was approved in 1989-90 to publicise UP development grants in Mexborough.

Advisory Committee on Works of Art

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will appoint a new member to the advisory committee on works of art in the House of Commons following the appointment of the hon. Member Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) as an Assistant Whip.

Mr. Ridley: I am pleased to announce that, with Mr. Speaker's agreement, I have appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) to the advisory committee.

Afforestation Grants

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make in the payment of compensation under management agreements in cases where afforestation grant is refused solely on nature conservation grounds.

Mr. Ridley: Following consultations with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretary of State for Wales, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I have agreed with the Nature Conservancy Council that it should not longer offer compensation for the refusal of afforestation grant where it is refused solely on nature conservation grounds.

Compensation will still be available for the profit forgone, excluding any grant element, in any case where planting would otherwise proceed.

In considering applicatons for grant for afforestation, the Forestry Commission will continue to pay full regard to nature conservation interest, and in particular to designations of sites of special scientific interest made by the NCC. While there will normally be a presumption against giving grants for afforestation in sites of special scientific interest, it must remain the case that each application will be considered on its merits.

This decision reflects the recent radical changes in support for forestry introduced in the 1988 Budget and the subsequent increases in planting grant under the new woodland grant scheme. These changes have made the grant element a very significant factor in determining the profitability of afforestation proposals and therefore in the compensation paid under management agreements. This is in marked contrast with the position in agriculture, where recent changes in the grant arrangements mean that it will now seldom be the case that these grants will form a significant element in the profit forgone calculation of management agreements offered by the NCC.

The withdrawal of compensation in these cases will be consistent with the developing policies of locational guidance for forestry illustrated by the indicative land use strategies under consideration by some local authorities in Scotland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is currently considering the nature and scope of any advice he might offer to local authorities in preparing indicative forestry strategies. I shall be considering with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales the guidance to be offered to English and Welsh authorities on the form that locational guidance should take in appropriate cases. The Forestry Commission and the NCC stand ready to assist local authorities in this task.

I am satisfied that, taking all these factors into account, it is in the public interest that the NCC's policy should be changed. The forestry industry can take confidence in their long term investment considerations from knowing at a very early stage the areas of land with potential for afforestation.

A revision of the financial guidelines will be issued as soon as possible.

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he will put forward at next week's governing council meeting of the United Nation's Environment Programme.

Mr. Ridley: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside, will represent the United Kingdom at the governing council and will set out the Government's views on the major global environmental issues on United Nations Environment Programme's agenda, including global warming.

To ensure that these issues are given the priority they deserve we want to strengthen the United Nations Environment Programme both in regard to existing functions and in preparing for the major United Nations conference on the environment in 1992.

In order to help to provide the United Nations Environment Programme with the resources it needs to carry out the task we require of it, the United Kingdom has more than doubled its financial contribution. We will be urging other countries to follow our lead.

We will call for the urgent consideration of a framework convention on the subject of climate change. This would establish general principles or guidelines and allow more specific measures to be developed in the form of protocols as scientific and other information becomes clearer.

We will also reiterate the Government's support for the intergovernmental panel on climate change set up by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Office.

Correspondence

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the letter of 17 January from Councillor Martin Doughty, chairman of the planning and countryside committee of Derbyshire county council.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning replied on 2 May to Councillor Doughty's letter concerning observations on the legal basis of discharge consent requirements for sewage treatment works. These issues have been under active consideration by my Department. That is why we were not able to give him an earlier substantive reply.

EC (Meetings)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The European Council met on three occasions in 1985 and 1988 and twice in 1986 and 1987. The Environment Council met formally on four occasions in 1985, three in 1986, four in 1987 and four in 1988. There were also occasional informal meetings of Environment Ministers. In addition, there were numerous meetings of officials. Information on the number of such meetings could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sewerage Incinerator, Yelland

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the sewerage incinerator at Yelland, North Devon will be tested *(a)* to comply with EC directive 84/360, *(b)* under the Health and Safety (Emissions into the Atmosphere) Regulations 1983 (SI, 1983, No. 943) and *(c)* under the Clean Air Acts before it is permitted to operate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Because the sewage screening incinerator at Yelland has a capacity of less than 1 tonne an hour, it will be controlled for air pollution purposes by the North Devon district council; it is for the council to determine what atmospheric emission testing is required.

Public Airport Companies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to representations about the application of the Local Government and Housing Bill to public airport companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* The Department has made it clear that the provisions of

part V of the Local Government and Housing Bill—local authority interests in companies—do not need, in general, to be applied to public airport companies since the Airports Act 1986 covers most of the points at issue. There may, however, be some aspects where, after consultation with local airport companies, it will seem sensible to extend the provisions to cover them.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Consumer Ministers

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what matters he proposes to discuss at the forthcoming meeting of the European Economic Community Consumer Ministers.

Mr. Forth: The Spanish presidency have indicated that they provisionally plan to include the following topics on the agenda for the Council of Consumer Ministers planned for 1 June.

Proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 87/102/EEC for the approximation of laws, regulations, and administrative provisions of Member States concerning Consumer Credit.

Draft resolution on future priorities for consumer protection.

Commission presentation of a further draft of the general product safety directive.

Consideration of the Commission's report on the European home and leisure accident surveillance system.

Consideration of a report by the Commission on consumer education in primary and secondary schools.

Exports

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent United Kingdom share of world exports of manufactured goods; and what was the level in 1979, 1969 and 1959.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recent United Kingdom share of world exports of manufactured goods; and what was the level in 1979, 1969 and 1959.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom Share of MMCs[1]	*Exports of Manufactures*[2] *Per cent.*
1988	[3]8·2
1979	9·1
1969	11·2
1959	17·9

[1] Main manufacturing countries—Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

[2] Standard international trade classification, sections 5-8.

[3] Figures based on the first three quarters of 1988.

Source: "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics."

Departmental Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the report on the review of Department of Trade and Industry statistics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Last July, an efficiency scrutiny was set up in the Department of Trade and Industry to examine the arrangements for the collection of economic statistics by DTI, and the methods by which statistical inquiries are undertaken. The scrutiny team, Alan Armstrong of Bristol university and David Rees of the DTI, was asked specifically to consider whether these arrangements struck a satisfactory balance between minimising the burdens placed on business in providing the information required, and meeting the needs for which the data are to be used by Government and other customers, and if not, to make recommendations accordingly. The report of this scrutiny is being published today, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

The report recommends a number of changes which, by shifting resources in data collection to the areas where they are most needed, will improve the quality of information used in macro-economic statistics. At the same time, the form-filling burden on business will be substantially reduced. Changes being made include conducting surveys less often, approaching fewer people and making forms simpler to complete. The cost to business will be reduced by about a quarter, resulting in savings of about £1·7 million on Government form filling. Further savings of over £500,000 per annum could be expected if EC requirements for statistics can be reduced, and I will be seeking ways of achieving this.

The report's recommendations will be implemented over the next three years, and this has begun. In the light of machinery of Government changes announced to the House by the Prime Minister on 5 April, responsibility for implementation of the recommendations still outstanding will transfer to the Central Statistical Office when these changes take effect. DTI Ministers, who have the lead responsibility for deregulation policy, will agree with the enlarged Central Statistical Office specific objectives to ensure that the burdens on industry are minimised.

USSR and China

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many British companies have set up joint ventures in *(a)* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and *(b)* China.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 8 May 1989]: (a)* Joint ventures, USSR: My Department is aware of 33 joint ventures signed to date between British companies and Soviet organisations. In addition, we are aware of a number of British companies presently involved in negotiations to set up joint ventures in the USSR, so the figure is likely to continue to grow.

(b) Joint ventures, China: My Department is aware, through the British embassy in Peking, of some 60 United Kingdom joint ventures covering a wide range of commercial activities.

WALES

Mental Health

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on problems in the replacement of mental health provision in Clwyd as a result of the run down of North Wales hospital, Denbigh.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has not been informed of problems with alternative provision in Clwyd in the context of the future of the North Wales hospital,

Denbigh. Welsh Office officials will be discussing with Clwyd district health authority and Clwyd county council the nature and range of services required for mentally ill people in developing the county plan to be produced under the mental illness strategy which is about to be published.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the recent changes in the staff of his Department responsible for mental health provision in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There have been two recent changes, one at grade 5 level and one at grade 7 level.

Community Health Councils (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters he has received opposing plans for reducing the number of community health councils in Gwynedd; what further consultation he intends to undertake on this matter; when he proposes to make a final decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Fifty-eight letters have been received by the Department up to 5 May. A consultation document will be issued later in the summer. A decision will be taken once the consultation exercise has been completed and the matter fully considered in the light of the comments received.

DHAs (Capital Projects)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each DHA, details of proposed capital development costing more than £1 million which have been cancelled for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: I regret that comprehensive information is not available centrally on the adjustments made by health authorities to their capital programmes over this period.

Ecclesiastical Exemption

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any proposals for an order under section 58AA of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, which provides for the restriction of the ecclesiastical exemption.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office has today issued a consultation paper to interested parties setting out our proposals. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office for Information, together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* For the years 1985-86 and 1986-87, the Welsh Office mounted no major publicity campaigns. Major campaigns undertaken/planned by the Welsh Office in the following years were:

1987-88

(a) *European Year of Environment*
Objective To promote the aims of the European Year of Environment to farmers and rural communities by an exhibition at major agricultural shows throughout Wales.
Audience Farmers and people working and living in rural communities. (*Cost* £111k)

1988-89

(b) *Enterprise Wales Roadshow*
Objective To promote the various schemes offered under the Enterprise Initiative, especially those unique to Wales, through paid advertising, and a travelling exhibition at industrial estates (42) throughout Wales.
Audience All types of business looking for assistance to develop. (*Cost* £70k)
Measure of Effectiveness Unit cost of "serious" inquiry (ie one that was followed up by Welsh Office Industry Department) was measured. This was approximately £100 per inquiry.

(c) *Valleys Initiative*
Objective To launch the Valleys Initiative through a Print and Press launch.
Audience Press, local authorities and businesses within Valleys. (*Cost* £40k)

1989-90

(d) *Festival of Food and Farming*
Objective To promote Welsh food and crafts in England and Wales through an exhibition at Hyde Park, followed by displays at major agricultural events in Wales.
Audience Retail and wholesale buyers, general public. Number of trade inquiries being measured. (*Cost* £200k)

(e) *Community Charge*
Objective To make people aware of the legal requirements and rebates of the community charge through bilingual paid advertising and leaflets, via postal drop to all households in Wales
Audience All households in Wales. (*Cost* £400k)
Measure of effectiveness Estimated cost of informing each household 33p.

(f) The Welsh Office also took part in the following major campaigns initiated by other Whitehall Departments:

	1988-89 £k	*1989-90* £k
Drugs/AIDS	60	180
Education	100	150-200
Transport and Highways	30	35
Housing	—	92

No research by COI has been commissioned by the Welsh Office for any of these campaigns.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animals (Research)

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding has been allocated for 1989 for projects for refinement of technology and replacement of animals in research in the United Kingdom; and how much of the 1989 budget will be spent on projects initiated in 1988 and continuing into 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One hundred and twenty thousand pounds; of which nearly £48,000 is committed to projects already being funded. More will be provided if this can be justified to support particular work of high merit and outstanding value.

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* unsuccessful and

(b) successful applicants there were in 1988 for funding for projects for refinement of technology and replacement of animals in research; how much of the 1988 grant was spent on advertising; and how much of the 1988 grant was spent on administration of the funds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I informed the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 6 March at column *383*, there were 120 unsuccessful and four successful applicants. One thousand and fifty pounds was spent on assessor's fees; no advertising or other administrative costs fell on the research budget for 1988-89.

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of project licences for animal experiments in 1988; and how many were in each severity banding.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information will be contained in the report of the Animal Procedures Committee for 1988, due to be published in July.

Postal Votes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has done on extending the use of a postal vote to all electors who request it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None specifically. A summary of our inquiries in this area is set out in a Home Office consultation paper, made available following the reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 2 March at column *274*.

Prisons (Car Travel)

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on car travel for members of prison boards of visitors in each year from 1985 to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information is not available in the form required and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prisons (Catering)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress the working party on prison catering has made in relation to prisons on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The working party is to visit the Isle of Wight this month. It will then consider and cost alternatives including central civilianised or contracted out kitchens as proposed by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons following his visit to Parkhurst last year. Because two of the three prisons house prisoners for whom the very highest conditions of security are necessary the working party is taking account of operational as well as catering considerations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Nottingham CTC

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has received from the Nottingham city technology college to end the traditional pattern of school hours and three term years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The CTCs are expected to have a longer school year and a longer working week than is normal in maintained schools. It will be for each college to decide how best to fit this pattern to its own circumstances. We are aware that the Djanogly CTC in Nottingham is considering a move from a three-term to a five-term year, and a working day beginning rather earlier than is common.

Assisted Places

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for the three counties of Yorkshire the number of preparatory schools to be included in the assisted places scheme in 1989-90 and the amount of fee remission grant to be allocated to them.

Mrs. Rumbold: Preparatory schools are not eligible for admission to the assisted places scheme in their own right. However, in certain cases where a clear link with a participating independent secondary school is demonstrated, it may offer assisted places between the ages of 11 and 13 under the terms of the main school's participation agreement. St. Olave's preparatory school, York offers places which are subsequently tenable at St. Peters school, York under such an arrangement. It is not possible to identify separately the amount of fee remission paid annually to pupils at St. Olave's.

Teachers (Devon)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he has not yet authorised Devon county council to pay the teachers employed by the council the 6 per cent. increase in their salaries from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The draft school teachers' pay and conditions document 1989 was issued for consultation on 27 April. Many teachers are likely to receive their salary increases by the end of May.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Rumbold: The Department has not advertised on commercial television during the last five years.

Geography

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to set up a working group to recommend attainment targets and programmes of study for geography within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to the reply, 5 May 1989, c. 256]:* I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Roger Davies, chairman of Thomson Travel Group to complete the membership of the national curriculum geography working group,.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentre and Benefit Offices

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make a statement on progress of the programme to integrate jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices;

(2) how many prime-site jobcentres it is intended to vacate under the jobcentre/unemployment benefit offices integration scheme.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *349*. No decisions have been taken about the future of the employment service local office network.

European Tourism Year 1990

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the financial contribution of his Department towards his implementation of the European Tourism Year 1990.

Mr. Lee: The Department is not directly funding the implementation of European Tourism Year 1990. The United Kingdom initiative is being led by the British Tourist Authority and it is not yet clear what its total spending on activities connected with the year will be.

YTS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for England and Wales *(a)* how many YTS trainees are on schemes run by local authorities in each region, *(b)* what is the total number of YTS trainees in each local authority region and *(c)* how many trainees are on transitional funded YTS run by local authorities for each region before 1 April.

Mr. Cope: The numbers of YTS trainees in training on schemes run by local authorities and in total are shown in the table.

Trainees who are in schemes that attract transitional funding are not separately identified and, therefore, the information requested could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Number of young people in training in England and Wales at 31 March 1989

Region	*Local authority including local education*	*Total number of trainees in each region*
Northern	7,147	30,298
North West	11,415	60,445
Yorkshire and Humberside	11,182	45,029
West Midlands	10,480	43,493
East Midlands and Eastern	9,861	46,446
South West	9,254	30,426
South East	7,876	39,988
London	3,565	21,131
Wales	6,096	23,666
Total England and Wales	76,876	340,922

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will show for England and Wales for each region *(a)* how many YTS schemes are run (1) by voluntary and community organisation and (2) by the local authorities, *(b)* what is the total number of YTS schemes run in each local authority region, *(c)* how many YTS schemes are run by voluntary and community organisations which received a transitional funding grant before 1 April, *(d)* how many YTS schemes are run by local authorities which received a transitional funding grant before 1 April and, *(e)* how many YTS schemes were paid a transitional funded grant in respect of training before 1 April.

Mr. Cope: The information that identifies types of schemes in each region of England and Wales is shown in the table. Schemes that attract a transitional funding grant are not separately identified and, therefore, the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Number of YTS schemes in England and Wales by type at 31 March 1989

Region	*Voluntary and community organisation*	*Local Authority*	*Other*	*Total*
Northern	62	75	505	642
North West	99	159	1,175	1,443
Yorkshire and Humberside	60	92	784	936
West Midlands	90	110	924	1,124
East Midlands and Eastern	68	140	923	1,131
South West	36	79	566	681
South East	55	128	997	1,180
London	68	70	676	814
Wales	51	85	424	560
Total England and Wales	589	938	6,974	8,501

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of YTS trainees, during the last 12 months, who obtained employment within six months of completing their training in *(a)* the Doncaster area and *(b)* the Mexborough area of South Yorkshire; and what percentage this represents of those who completed their training.

Mr. Cope: This information is not available in exactly the form requested. The latest results from the YTS follow-up survey shows that 396 trainees in the Doncaster

area, including Mexborough who completed their training in the period December 1987 to November 1988 were in employment three months later. This represents 79 per cent. of all trainees in the area who completed their training.

Training

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he plans to visit Nottingham, North to discuss employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit Nottingham, North.

Ferranti (Job Losses)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will reply to the letter sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 6 April concerning the impending job losses at Ferranti's Wythenshawe factory.

Mr. Fowler: A reply was sent to the right hon. Gentleman on 8 May 1989.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the statement made by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) *Official Report*, 13 April, column 1135, if he will set out in detail each of the stages of the nuclear cycle to which he makes reference wherein reports of plutonium stocks and measures are made; to whom these reports are made available; how regularly they are forwarded; and if any irregularities have been discovered in the reports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Regular reports are submitted to Euratom. These reports are confidential.

Drinking Water (Thames House)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, if he will set out in the *Official Report* a copy of the 1988 analysis of the drinking water supply in his Department's head office, Thames house, showing the amount by which this water supply failed to meet the European Economic Community drinking water quality criteria.

Mr. Parkinson: I am advised by the Property Services Agency that the results of analyses of drinking water supplied to my Department's headquarters building, Thames house south, in 1988, showing the comparisons with the European Community maximum admissible levels are:

	European Community Maximum admissable concentration	*Thames House South*	
		Recorded Maximum	*Recorded minimum*
Sulphate	250mg/litre	482mg/litre	405mg/litre
Fluoride	[2]500ug/litre	2,120ug/litre	1,400ug/litre
Potassium	12mg/litre	13·6mg/litre	12·6mg/litre
Sodium	175mg/litre	204mg/litre	190mg/litre
Magnesium	50mg/litre	51·3mg/litre	46mg/litre
Iron	50ug/litre	3,120ug/litre	less than 5ug/litre
Manganese	50ug/litre	84ug/litre	less than 20ug/litre
Nickel	50ug/litre	94ug/litre	59ug/litre
Conductivity	1,500us/cm	1,729us/cm	1,660us/cm
Turbidity	4 NTU	21 NTU	0·2 NTU

Since the introduction of the point of use filters the levels of iron and colour have been consistently below 5ug/litre and 4NTUs respectively. The other elements have remained between the recorded maximum and minimum. I am also advised by PSA that the presence of these elements, either singly or in combination, is not considered to be a health hazard. As I explained in my earlier answer the water for my Department's headquarters building is supplied from a borehole and from the public mains supply.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Siemens Printers

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Siemens ND3 printers are used by his Department, either in-house or through a private contract; and what is the location of each.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Parades

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parades were notified to the Royal Ulster Constabulary under the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order in *(a)* 1986, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This is a matter for the Chief Constable. However, I understand that the information is not available in the form requested. Statistics are compiled on the basis of parades notified to the RUC which actually took place. The Chief Constable's annual reports indicate that 1,950 parades were held in 1986, 2,112 in 1987 and 2,055 in 1988, but these figures do not include parades by youth organisations, churches and other similar bodies.

Mental Health (Grants)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grants have been made by each of the area boards or Government Departments to branches of the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health in each of the past three years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Department of Health and Social Services	165,290	131,738	127,100
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	54,459	109,843	168,348
Northern Health and Social Services Board	771	495	69,740
Southern Health and Social Services Board	962	7,222	44,876
Western Health and Social Services Board	3,600	22,000	20,450
Department of Economic Development[1]	5,501	7,764	13,112
Total	230,583	279,062	443,626

[1] Payments made whether directly or indirectly under the Action for Community Employment (ACE) Scheme.

Children (Financial Support)

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children in Northern Ireland depended on *(a)* SB/IS and *(b)* FIS/FC in each year since 1978-79, (i) in total and (ii) as a percentage of all children in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The available information is as follows:

Dependants under 19 years of people on:

Year	*Supplementary benefit/IS* *Numbers*[1]	*Per cent.*[2]	*FIS/FC* *Numbers*[1]	*Per cent.*[2]
1978	70,545	14·57	30,402	6·28
1979	64,790	13·28	27,493	5·63
1980	80,308	16·42	28,857	5·90
1981	93,595	19·55	36,378	7·60
1982	109,863	23·17	38,734	8·17
1983	117,083	24·88	39,557	8·41
1984	116,256	24·86	40,813	8·73
1985	—[3]	—	42,613	9·16
1986	135,254	29·20	42,233	9·12
1987	134,052	29·14	40,982	8·91
1988	—[4]	—	[5]37,500	8·19

[1] Supplementary benefit/IS 5 per cent. sample and FIS 30 per cent. sample.
[2] Represents the percentage of all children entitled to child benefit.
[3] There was no survey in 1985.
[4] Figures not yet available.
[5] Estimated figure—incomplete date.

General Practitioners

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement indicating the nature of any cash limits on the total expenditure on general practitioner trainers' allowances and trainees' remuneration, and the respective votes from which such funding is derived.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The funding of GP trainers' allowances and trainees' remuneration is contained in subhead B1 of the Department's health and personal social services vote 1, which in turn forms part of the cash limit on Northern Ireland's departmental services (NID 1). However, the Secretary of State has flexibility to reallocate resources within the cash limit, for example, to cover unavoidable pressures in this sector.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what weight is given to what factors in determining the number of general practitioner trainees who are to be remunerated by the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland in a given year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The number of general practitioner trainees selected in Northern Ireland in a given year is determined by the estimated future demands of the Province for general practitioners.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of prospective general practitioner trainees who were recommended by the relevant selection body in the current year and the number which were approved by the Department; what factors determined the decision by the Department; and how selection of the numbers approved by the Department proceeds.

Mr Needham *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* Ninety-seven prospective trainees were interviewed by the selection panel this year and placed in order of merit. The Department determined that 50 doctors should be trained for general practice this year, but in the event 52 were accepted because a number were considered of equal merit by the selection panel. The number approved by the Department was determined by the estimated future demands of the Province for general practitioners. The procedures for selection of trainees are contained in circular HSS (TM) 3/80 supplement No. 1, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Expenditure Survey

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish the latest take-up figures based on the family expenditure survey.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We expect to publish take-up estimates for 1985 this summer.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the changes in method of payment for housing benefit for those in board and lodging accommodation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 10 April we have received a small number of letters from organisations and individuals

about the change in providing help with board and lodging charges which took place on that day. The change, which abolishes special rates of income support for boarders and allows people in board and lodging accommodation to receive housing benefit for their accommodation costs, was proposed in a consultation document issued in December 1986. Over 170 responses to that document were received. These expressed widespread acceptance of the principle that there should be parity both in the treatment of people in similar types of accommodation, whether or not board was provided, and between people in identical accommodation, whether or not they were working.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department is monitoring the implementation of the new method of housing benefit payment for those in board and lodging accommodation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are committed to monitoring the effects of the social security reforms on all groups. This monitoring is a continuous process which draws on a wide range of information sources, including local authorities, who administer housing benefit.

Overpayment

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide the most recent figures broken down by (i) year and (ii) section on *(a)* the number of overpayments recovered under section 53 of the Social Security Act 1986, section 119 of the Social Security Act 1975 and section 20 of the Supplementary Benefit Act 1976, *(b)* the number of standard letters sent indicating that recovery may be pursued through civil proceedings, *(c)* the number of cases actually pursued for recovery of overpayments through civil proceedings and *(d)* the number of cases pursued under *(c)* which are successful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has regarding the average time over the last three years between the lodging and hearing of an appeal to the social security appeals tribunal in *(a)* Lerwick, *(b)* Shetland and *(c)* Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: National administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals are not disaggregated for areas smaller than a social security region.

The table gives the information for Scotland from 1986 to the quarter ending September 1988 (the latest figures available).

Social security appeal tribunals
Lodgement to hearing
Scotland

Period	*Average weekly clearance time*
12 months ending December 1986	14·0
12 months ending December 1987	23·3
3 months ending March 1988	25·9
3 months ending June 1988	23·7
3 months ending September 1988	23·3

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Community Business

88. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has concerning the consideration of European Community business by Parliament.

Mr. Wakeham: I am discussing these matters with the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Fire Exercises

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what was the response of hon. Members to the fire exercises listed in his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *408*; and if he is satisfied with their level of participation.

Mr. Beith: The records of fire exercises do not distinguish hon. Members from other participants. It is therefore not possible for me to comment on the level of Members' participation.

Late-night Staff

Mr. Allen: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the approximate or average cost of 128 staff on duty after 10 pm.

Mr. Beith: Non-industrial staff with a commitment to remain on duty as a direct consequence of sittings of the House receive either an annual allowance which in most cases is calculated from 6 pm according to an agreed formula; or night duty pay which varies according to the lateness of the hour. Industrial staff, in general, are paid at overtime rates for the actual number of hours worked. Details of these allowances are set out in the annual report of the House of Commons Commission.

The varying times of adjournment of the House and difficulty in extracting the appropriate proportion of some of the costs involved make the provision of any meaningful figure possible only at disproportionate cost.

Ten-minute Bills

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *408*, when he expects to be able to state when he will bring forward proposals relating to ten-minute Bills.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 24 April at column *408*.

HEALTH

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority in England in 1987 *(a)* the total number of beds, and the number of beds per 100,000 population, in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984, *(b)* the total number of beds for care of those over 65 years requiring long-stay nursing care

in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds for the care of the elderly per 100,000 population aged over 65 years in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Residential care homes, registered under part I of the Registered Homes Act 1984, are registered by local authority social services departments. Information on these is therefore available by local authority, not by district health authority.

Tables placed in the Library show provisional information as at 31 March 1987, by local authority, on the total number of places, the number of places in homes for elderly people, and the respective rates per 100,000 population. The number of places in homes registered under part I of the Act is published annually in "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes year ending 31 March England" and "Homes and Hostels for Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People at 31 March England"; copies of which are available in the Library.

Hospitals and nursing homes, registered under part II of the Registered Homes Act 1984, are registered by district health authorities. My hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Gentleman on 4 May at columns *223-30* show as at 31 March 1988, by district health authority, the total number of beds, the number nominally assigned to elderly people, and the respective rates per 100,000 population. The information available on beds assigned for use by elderly people does not distinguish between long and short-term care.

Whole Body Scanners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which National Health Service hospitals in the Trent regional health authority at present have whole body scanner facilities; when the equipment was installed in each case; which hospitals it is planned to provide with such facilities as new or to replace obsolete facilities in the next 12 months; and which hospitals have paid for equipment in whole or part from voluntary and charitable sources.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table.

Type of whole scanner in use	*Location in Trent*	*Installation date*	*Main source of funding*
CT	Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal Hospital	1984	Public appeal
CT	Derby Royal Infirmary	1985	Public appeal
CT	Doncaster Royal Infirmary	1986	Health authority allocation
CT	King's Mill Hospital	1987	Public appeal
CT	Leicester Royal Infirmary	1982	Public appeal
CT	Lincoln County Hospital	1985	Public appeal
CT	Nottingham City	1988	Public subscription
CT	Nottingham University Hospital	1984	Health authority allocation
CT	Sheffield Royal Hallamshire	1985	Health authority allocation
CT	Sheffield Royal Hallamshire	1985	Public appeal
Magnetic resonance	Queen's Medical Centre Nottingham	1985	Department of Health

In the next 12 months, new whole body CT scanners are planned at the Pilgrim hospital, south Lincolnshire and the children's hospital, Sheffield and two replacements at Leicester royal infirmary. Only the south Lincolnshire scanner is being funded by public appeal.

Halton DHA

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of domestic services in Halton district health authority; and what is the national average.

Mr. Mellor: For 1987-88 the annual accounts of the Halton health authority recorded current expenditure of £355,824 on domestic cleaning services representing 1·9 per cent. of the authority's total current expenditure. Average current expenditure on these services by all district health authorities in England was £1,798,723, representing 3·2 per cent. of their current expenditure.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to subsume Halton district health authority in other districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no such plans.

NHS Reform

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the child immunisation target of 90 per cent. and the cervical cytology screening target of 80 per cent. are still figures open for negotiation as part of the general practitioners' contract.

Mr. Mellor: We have no intention of changing our policy that coverage levels should be raised to 90 per cent. for childhood immunisation and 80 per cent. for cervical cancer screening. For childhood immunisation, this is the level recommended by the WHO, which this Government have adopted.

We have agreed with the general medical services committee's negotiators that we will make target payments to GPs who achieve those levels. We will also make target payments at one third of the value of the higher payments to GPs who achieve lower target coverage levels; the lower levels will be 70 per cent. coverage for childhood immunisation and 50 per cent. coverage for cervical cancer screening.

Midwives (Regrading)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he is yet in a position to implement the recommendations in the recent Select Committee on Social Services report, "Resourcing the National Health Service: Midwives Regrading 1988-89"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Select Committee on Social Services' recommendations on the regrading of midwives.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's response to the Committee's report will be laid before the House in the usual way as soon as possible.

Smoking

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply of 13 March, *Official Report*, column *64*, if he plans to increase the frequency of such meetings; whether he will inform the representatives of the medical professions of the outcome of meetings with the tobacco industry; and whether he will invite the representatives of the medical professions to attend as observers at future meetings with the tobacco industry.

Mr. Mellor: Meetings between Department of Health Ministers or officials and our expert advisory committees or other bodies with an interest in the health aspects of smoking are already frequent, and we do not consider an increase in frequency necessary. If pressing matters arise on which advice is needed, additional meetings are arranged. Meetings with representatives of the tobacco industry are confidential. This is the most effective way of carrying out negotiations or discussions on issues where there are strong commercial or trade interests involved. As a result, no reports can be issued to the medical profession, nor can representatives of the medical profession be invited to attend such meetings as observers. The Government have not, in any case, received any requests from members of the medical profession to be informed of the content of such meetings.

Halton Hospital

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether the Mersey regional health authority members' panel set up to consider the viability of the proposed phase III development of Halton district general hospital took any verbal representations from members of Halton district health authority before reaching their conclusions;

(2) whether Mersey regional health authority members' panel set up to consider the viability of the proposed phase III development of Halton district general hospital contained a representative of Halton district health authority;

(3) if he will state the names, occupations and addresses of the Mersey regional health authority members panels of *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1989 set up to examine the future of Halton district general hospital.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority.

Non-metropolitan Districts (Electorates)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the 30 English non-metropolitan districts which have shown the greatest percentage growth in their electorate since 1977; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Non-metropolitan districts in England	*1977 electorate*	*1989 electorate*	*Percentage increase*
Milton Keynes	65,821	123,394	87
Redditch	37,437	56,259	50
Wokingham	75,249	106,314	41
Tamworth	36,522	50,400	38
Peterborough	82,443	111,696	35
The Wrekin	75,830	102,315	35
Hart	47,486	63,851	34
Bracknell	49,045	65,644	34
Huntingdonshire	75,503	100,734	33
East Dorset	48,193	64,131	33
Selby	53,256	70,431	32
Eastleigh	60,844	79,403	31
Northampton	104,813	135,009	29
Basingstoke and Deane	83,726	107,806	29
Fareham	59,643	76,766	29
South Staffordshire	64,020	82,316	29
Aylesbury Vale	84,028	107,930	28
East Hampshire	60,501	77,703	28
Newbury	80,397	102,786	28
Caradon	47,018	59,681	27
Thamesdown	101,525	128,337	26
Crawley	52,831	66,455	26
South Cambridgeshire	71,785	90,295	26
Woodspring	112,291	140,951	26
Cherwell	66,599	83,326	25
Test Valley	61,063	76,366	25
Chelmsford	93,611	116,707	25
Basildon	99,792	123,516	24
Glanford	44,892	55,494	24
Daventry	38,872	48,049	24

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the 20 English non-metropolitan counties which have shown the greatest percentage growth in electorate since 1977; and what has been the percentage growth and actual figures in each case.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Non-metropolitan Counties in England	*1977 electorate*	*1989 electorate*	*Percentage increase*
Buckinghamshire	367,962	471,784	28
Cambridgeshire	397,410	487,942	23
Shropshire	256,612	310,173	21
Berkshire	460,726	554,177	20
Northamptonshire	364,561	435,831	20
Hereford and Worcester	436,878	521,824	19
Somerset	303,750	362,634	19
Wiltshire	360,645	427,764	19
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	310,500	366,452	18
Dorset	445,468	522,355	17
Lincolnshire	387,833	454,040	17
Hampshire	1,021,220	1,190,957	17
Norfolk	503,241	584,031	16
West Sussex	483,064	560,073	16
Suffolk	413,062	478,846	16
Bedfordshire	337,682	389,043	15
North Yorkshire	486,059	554,028	14
Isle of Wight	89,477	101,864	14
Gloucestershire	360,765	410,678	14
Oxfordshire	371,292	421,729	14

District Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be appointing new chairmen to district health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The term of office of 128 chairmen of district health authorities ends on 31 March 1990 and we are currently seeking nominations for new chairmen. If hon. Members wish to recommend any individuals as chairmen, I invite them to write to me over the next month or so. Reappointments and changes will be announced in due course.

Constituencies (Electorates)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the 25 largest parliamentary constituencies by electorate, with their electorates; and what is the average constituency electorate on the current register.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

1989

Parliamentary constituency	*Electorate*
Milton Keynes	107,011
Isle of Wight	101,859
East Hampshire	91,737
Huntingdon	91,315
Eastleigh	90,119
Swindon	89,939
Devizes	88,792
The Wrekin	88,467
Westbury	88,234
Peterborough	87,573
East Berkshire	87,432
Wokingham	87,393
Cirencester and Tewksbury	87,111
Ryedale	86,907
South Colchester and Maldon	86,631
Dudley West	85,955
South Suffolk	85,888
North Colchester	85,241
Crosby	84,907
North Wiltshire	84,610
Horsham	84,501
Waveney	84,319
South West Cambridgeshire	83,964
Mid Bedfordshire	83,854
Chelmsford	83,799
Average constituency electorate:	
United Kingdom	67,098
England	69,533
Wales	57,753
Scotland	54,624
Northern Ireland	65,912

Trent RHA (Pay Gradings)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will detail the pay gradings of each district health authority general manager in the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The gradings of district general manager posts in the Trent region, and the salary grade rates from 1 September 1988, are set out in the table. In addition, district general managers are eligible for a discretionary addition of up to 10 per cent. of the grade rate (to reflect differences in job weight) and performance-related pay. Details of the performance-related pay awarded to individual general managers are confidential between them and their employer.

Districts	*Grade*	*Grade rate at 1 September 1988 (£)*
Southern Derbyshire Leicestershire Nottingham Sheffield	1	37,110
Barnsley North Derbyshire Doncaster North Lincolnshire South Lincolnshire Central Nottinghamshire Rotherham	2	35,450
Bassetlaw	3	33,790

Nursing (Recruits)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the reasons for his decision to permit, or require, the chief nursing officer of the Department to send a standard letter to potential recruits to the nursing service asking them to enclose a fee of £6 for an application package; and if he will review this decision.

Mr. Mellor: Applications for pre-registration nurse training are handled not by the Department but by the Nurses Central Clearing House (NCCH). The NCCH is managed by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting on behalf of health authorities. It is for the board to determine what, if any, administrative charge should be made to potential applicants.

GPs (Overprescribing)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prosecutions of general practitioners for overprescribing have taken place in England since the National Health Service Committee's Tribunal Regulations (S.I. 1974 No. 455) came into effect.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* In the period 1974-88 inclusive the Department's regional medical service made a total of 12,068 visits to discuss with practices their prescribing costs and patterns. These visits are made largely to practices whose total costs exceeded their FPC average by a significant amount. Some practices were visited more than once. None of these visits resulted in a reference for formal investigation of excessive prescribing under the terms of the National Health Service Committee and Tribunal Regulations. However, visits to such high prescribing-cost practices are very cost-effective. We estimate that on average each visit saves around £12,000 per practice in the first full year.

AIDS

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list each of the advertising agents used for any aspects of the Government AIDS campaign, with the payments made in each case.

Mr. Mellor: The advertising agents used for the Government's AIDS campaign and the payments made exclusive of VAT were as follows:

Year	Agency	Payment (£ million)
1985-86	TBWA	0·35
1986-87	TBWA	2·79
1987-88	TBWA	[1]6·43
1988-89[2]	TBWA	0·76
	BMP Davidson Pierce	2·30
Total	TBWA	10·33
Total	BMP Davidson Pierce	2·30

[1] This figure includes a joint AIDS-Drugs Misuse anti-injecting campaign.
[2] Excludes spending on anti-injecting advertisements in the Drug Misuse campaign run by Yellowhammer.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Mellor: Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

Stump Socks

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the average cost per hundred stump socks to the National Health Service in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The average cost per hundred stump socks by type of yarn and for all yarns is as follows:

Type	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £	1987-88 £	1988-89 £
Woollen	203	224	238	246	261
Cotton	112	121	132	144	150
Nylon	54	58	63	69	74
All types[1]	123	134	144	153	162

Note: Since 1 July 1987, the Disablement Services Authority has been responsible for the supply of stump socks. Any further information should be sought from the Authority.
[1] Cost weighted according to the average mix of type of yarns per 100 stump socks.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each year since 1970, and for each health region, the total number of hospital admissions on a day-case basis.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 26 April 1989]:* The available information is given in the table.

Day cases attendances, NHS hospitals, by region, 1972 to 1987-88

	1972[1]	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88[2]
Northern	32,170	31,308	31,001	29,316	33,573	37,875	41,341	46,416	54,023	56,219	52,833	66,093	68,658	75,473	81,047	83,335
Yorkshire	32,557	33,646	38,457	38,252	46,741	54,683	55,097	55,060	60,680	62,788	58,883	70,869	72,718	76,174	81,635	74,933
Trent	37,354	30,743	35,449	33,061	38,453	40,532	42,083	48,511	57,314	61,260	58,140	72,003	80,159	85,691	95,092	67,866
East Anglian	12,956	13,663	14,735	17,253	23,319	26,092	28,093	28,314	32,675	33,916	30,768	33,235	35,818	39,572	42,022	28,955
North-West Thames[3]	23,998	31,853	23,843	20,992	24,733	28,471	29,460	37,649	41,028	44,219	43,330	49,494	58,558	63,170	67,766	50,091
North-East Thames[3]	32,623	23,643	34,607	35,282	33,396	36,813	38,294	39,871	41,910	47,208	48,744	51,725	57,850	67,472	70,304	51,924
South-East Thames[3]	21,257	25,808	27,010	23,909	30,012	38,272	40,903	42,706	44,705	45,117	49,717	59,983	72,702	66,323	71,323	48,855
South-West Thames[3]	13,252	15,285	17,315	18,807	22,585	23,795	20,406	23,519	28,827	37,867	32,836	33,676	39,613	45,395	56,449	53,391
Wessex	20,367	21,780	28,009	26,698	34,297	35,816	37,695	36,962	43,210	44,029	44,665	49,226	54,300	59,340	63,297	46,876
Oxford	15,864	15,930	18,780	17,967	18,203	21,216	23,146	21,656	23,882	23,824	23,585	27,183	29,931	35,184	39,901	43,809
South Western	31,321	29,716	32,790	30,923	32,257	38,104	39,397	40,037	40,099	43,095	44,685	48,878	51,614	62,168	63,375	55,306
West Midlands	34,998	42,962	48,517	41,810	46,477	49,793	51,614	51,769	61,532	64,847	64,973	74,215	80,097	83,251	93,403	60,500
Mersey	41,625	43,890	44,062	36,741	39,193	40,285	41,787	44,460	55,556	54,509	55,490	62,979	70,554	69,403	79,098	79,740
North Western	47,726	48,271	51,532	46,613	53,471	60,068	68,080	70,608	79,217	88,143	85,874	99,994	115,410	116,317	125,564	120,368

[1] Day case figures were not collected before 1972.
[2] Some patients previously classified as day cases may since April 1987 be newly classified as ward attenders.
[3] Figures for these regions are not strictly comparable over the whole period, due to NHS restructuring in 1982.

"Working For Patients"

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on how co-ordination of local authority community care services and health services are to be maintained once local authorities are no longer represented on health authorities as described in paragraph 8.6 of "Working For Patients" (Cm. 555).

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Local authorities and health authorities are statutorily obliged to collaborate in the development of services, and mechanisms exist for encouraging liaison between them. Ways in which these mechanisms can be made to work more effectively are being examined as part of our consideration of Sir Roy Griffiths' report on community care, and we shall take account of "Working For Patients" in those deliberations.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in the light of paragraph 3.7 of "Working For Patients" Cm. 555, people with multiple pathology or conditions which are difficult to treat, will be expected to transfer from centre to centre if a health authority has contracts for different services with different hospitals.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Differences in the services available may mean that, as now, some patients need to attend more than one hospital for different forms of treatment. However, district health

authorities will be expected to arrange contracts so that health care services are provided flexibly and in a way that is responsive to patients' needs and wishes.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much prescription charges have risen in cash and real terms between April 1979 and April 1989.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

	£
1979-80	0·20
[1]1989-90	2·80
[2]1989-90	1·41

[1] Current prices.
[2] 1979-80 prices.

Nursing Students

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to announce the level of bursary for a nursing student enrolling on a course under the project 2,000 nursing education reforms.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to do so shortly.

Food Contamination

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will reply to the questions asked by the hon. Member for Caerphilly on 18 January concerning the possible contamination of farmed food.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I replied to the hon. Member on Monday 20 February.

THE ARTS

Office Art Collection

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing the *(a)* paintings, *(b)* prints, *(c)* sculptures and *(d)* other artefacts in his Office's art collection.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Artist	*Title*
(a) Paintings	
Ann Redpath	The Pink Decanter
James Robertson	Hills in Spain
Melvyn Chantry	Stream, Derwent Water
James Northcote	Mr. John Culme
John Piper	View of Cheltenham: Montpelier Walk
John Piper	View of Bath: Composite of Bath Street and corner of Camden Crescent
John Craxton	Landscape with Returning Shrimper
Frank Averbach	Mornington Crescent
Peter Coker	The Gorsebush
Patrick George	Hick Bush
Ishaq Kohbji	Untitled
Richard Gilbert	Departure 1987
(b) Prints	
Joe Tilson	Moon Signatures
Richard Edwards	Santorini
Glen Baxter	Brenda
Glen Baxter	Saturday morning shopping
David Freed	Richard III
Jennifer Dickson	Le Septieme Jour
Juan Martinez	Untitled 1969
Cecil King	Bagot Street
(c) Sculptures	
None	
(d) Other artefacts	
Photographs:	
John Davies	Isle of Skye towards Loch Brittle
Paul Wakefield	River Orchy, Scotland
Paul Wakefield	Afon Hondu
Other items:	
Sutton Taylor	Large lustre bowl
Judith Trim	Two Oval oxidised porcelain bowls
Michael Casson	Two stoneware articles
Michael Lloyd	Silver bowl
Alistair McCallum	Mokume Gane bowl
Fiona Salazar	Earthenware pot
Janice Tchalenko	Stoneware teapot
Peter Chatwin	Laminated bowl

The articles are all on loan except the painting by Ishaq Kohbji which was a gift from the Bahrainian Arts Society.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Yorkshire (Environmentally Sensitive Areas)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by name for the three counties of Yorkshire the total land area per site designated as an environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Ryder: No ESA is wholly within the three counties of Yorkshire. Some 8,200 hectares (52 per cent.) of the Pennine Dales ESA lies in North Yorkshire, while 6,390 hectares (13 per cent.) of the North Peak ESA lie in South Yorkshire and 4,200 hectares (8 per cent.) lie in West Yorkshire.

Salmonella

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ensure that following the establishment of the single market in 1992 thorough checks will be made at United Kingdom ports, airports and rail links to ensure that any consignment of eggs which is contaminated with salmonella is detected and dealt with.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Because the arrangements that will control the movement of eggs within the European Community after 1992 have yet to be decided upon, it would be unhelpful to spell out our plans for that period. However, I assure my hon. Friend that it is our intention to secure equivalence between the standards and inspections in member states to ensure that the interests of our egg producers and consumers are safeguarded.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is taken by his Department when consignments of imported eggs are found to be infected with salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: If a case of salmonella contamination is found in imported eggs, my Department will inform the EC Commission and the member state where the eggs were packed. Where appropriate I will also take the matter up with my opposite number in the member state concerned.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in the latest 12 months for which figures are available consignments of imported eggs have been *(a)* checked for salmonella infection and *(b)* found to be infected with salmonella.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Systematic monitoring of imported eggs for salmonella commenced only last month.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement outlining the checks which are made to ensure that salmonella-infected eggs and poultry are not imported into the United Kingdom from other European countries and from other non-European countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The systematic monitoring of imported eggs by the port health authorities in conjunction with the public health laboratory service has recently been introduced. Imports are being sampled at a rate which will provide a valid assessment of their bacteriological status. Similar arrangements would not be appropriate for poultrymeat.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

1. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards a peaceful settlement in Namibia.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Agreements have been reached on a framework for the return of SWAPO forces to positions north of the 16th parallel in Angola. South African troops and South West African territorial forces will be once again restricted to base. It is vital that these agreements are put into effect and that all parties abide by their undertakings in the United Nations plan.

86. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435 on Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We have been active in support of efforts to put the United Nations plan firmly back on track. We welcome the series of agreements reached by the joint commission which have this as their aim.

62. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Administrator General of Namibia or his officials to discuss the future of Rossing uranium in the context of an independent Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so. We hope that Rossing uranium will continue making its important contribution to the Namibian economy after independence.

17. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will pay an official visit to Namibia to discuss the transition to independence.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so. We are in regular contact with all those involved in the implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence.

Angola

2. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions representatives of Her Majesty's Government have had with the MPLA Government of Angola and UNITA regarding an end to the civil war in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We have regular contact with the Angolan Government. We also have occasional contact with UNITA at official level. We have impressed on both sides the need for flexibility if internal peace is to be achieved in Angola.

OECD

16. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the OECD Secretary-General on 13 February. They discussed current and future areas of work for the OECD, and preparation for the ministerial council.

EC-EFTA Relations

18. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the relations between the European Community and the European Free Trade Association.

Mrs. Chalker: Relations between the EC and EFTA are excellent. A joint ministerial meeting on 20 March agreed to discuss possibilities for further strengthening and extending co-operation. There will be a further ministerial meeting in the autumn. Meanwhile the programme of co-operation stimulated by the 1984 Luxembourg declaration continues.

Export Promotion

19. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources were committed in 1988-89 via the diplomatic wing to supporting export promotion and inward investment.

Mrs. Chalker: Figures for the financial year 1988-89 are still being collated and should be available in October. We expect them, however, to be approximately 10 per cent. up on the figures for 1987-88 which were as follows:

Total commercial work: £69 million of which approximately 91·7 per cent. (£63·27 million) for export promotion, 3·4 per cent. (£2·5 million) for inward investment and the remaining 4·9 per cent. (£3·38 million) for trade policy.

Nigeria

20. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current state of Anglo-Nigerian relations.

Mrs. Chalker: We enjoy close and cordial relations with Nigeria. President Babangida's state visit to the United Kingdom now taking place is evidence of that.

Eastern Europe

21. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement about relations with eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our relations with the countries of eastern Europe are as varied as the countries themselves. We naturally have the closest relations with those whose systems and values come closest to our own. In this context we welcome the substantial steps towards freedom and democracy taken recently in Poland and Hungary.

Drug Trade

22. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further practical measures have been agreed with the countries of Latin America to combat the international drug trade.

Mr. Eggar: I discussed measures to combat the international drugs trade with the Foreign Ministers of Colombia and Peru during their visits to the United Kingdom in April, and during my recent visit to Mexico. These measures include continued United Kingdom bilateral and multilateral assistance, and the negotiation of bilateral agreements to trace, freeze and confiscate the assets of drugs traffickers.

37. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further progress is being made in the international fight against the drugs trade.

Mr. Eggar: We have bilateral agreements or arrangements with six countries for tracing, freezing and confiscating traffickers' assets. We are negotiating similar agreements with about 20 countries and have approached some 20 others. Next week, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will host a meeting of Pompidou group Ministers to discuss, inter alia, asset confiscation and measures against cocaine.

23. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on moves towards Palestinian self-determination.

43. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the peace in the middle east.

65. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

87. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to believe that a settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and that an international conference, at the right time, will be necessary. We look forward to discussing with Mr. Shamir how his proposal for elections in the occupied territories can contribute to this process when he visits the United Kingdom later this month.

85. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to hold urgent talks with the United States Government and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in preparation for an international conference on the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain in close touch with the two Governments and with others concerned about the prospects for peace in the middle east. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State discussed these with both Mr. Shevardnadze and Secretary Baker last month.

75. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government concerning President Arafat's peace initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are in close touch with the Israeli authorities and look forward to further discussion of all aspects of the peace process with Mr. Shamir later this month.

78. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of the recent killings on the West Bank and Gaza on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: Violence, from whatever quarter, can make the search for peace in the middle east only more difficult. The Israeli authorities are well aware of our concern at their use of excessive force in the occupied territories.

Argentina

24. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve relations between Britain and Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: Since the Falklands conflict in 1982 we have consistently striven to restore more normal relations with Argentina. To this end we have taken a number of important initiatives.

The Argentine response to all of these has been disappointing. Indeed Argentina has recently formalised discrimination against British exporters, and continues to refuse access to our ships and aircraft.

56. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between Britain and Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: Since the Falklands conflict in 1982 we have consistently striven to restore more normal relations with Argentina. To this end we have taken a number of important initiatives.

The Argentine response to all of these has been disappointing. Indeed Argentina has recently formulated discrimination against British exporters, and continues to refuse access to our ships and aircraft.

50. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to visit Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Jordan

25. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he expects to meet King Hussein of the Hashmite Kingdom of Jordan for discussions on matters of mutual interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State held very useful discussions with King Hussein last month. They have at present no plans for a further meeting. I myself met the King in Amman in March.

Beirut

26. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made concerning the Christian community in Beirut; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. The recent fighting has affected members of all communities in Lebanon. In common with our partners in the Twelve we fully support the efforts of the Arab League to arrange a ceasefire and to seek a negotiated solution.

Internal Border Control

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his west European counterparts regarding the proposals put forward by the Schengen group of countries to abolish internal border controls.

Mrs. Chalker: In the context of the wider frontiers discussion within the European Community, we have naturally discussed with our partners the practical experience of the Schengen group, and the problems they have encountered.

Nuclear Weapons

28. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy of opposing the West German Government's proposals for early negotiations to reduce nuclear weapons in Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: The stated objective of the Warsaw pact is the elimination of nuclear weapons from Europe. NATO is committed to maintaining an adequate and effective mix of conventional and nuclear forces, including land-based missiles in Europe. Given this conflict of objectives, it is hard to see how there could be a fruitful outcome to any negotiations.

Iraq

29. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what continuing representations are being made to the Iraqi Government about persistent allegations of the torture, ill-treatment, execution and arbitrary arrest of children in Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said on 28 April, at column 686 the Government have repeatedly made clear to the Iraqi authorites our concern at Iraqi human rights violations and will continue to do so. The Iraqis know that we expect them to abide by their obligations under international agreements, which, in particular, prohibit the use of the death penalty against minors.

Nicaragua

30. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of Nicaragua; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: President Ortega made a private visit to the United Kingdom from 6 to 8 May in the course of an extensive European tour. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister received him on 8 May. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I saw Foreign Minister d'Escoto on the same day.

59. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to visit Nicaragua.

Air Fares (Europe)

31. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implication of the recent European Court of Justice judgment outlawing price fixing among European airlines for bringing down air fares in Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: We strongly support action within the European Community which ensures that air travellers are charged fair prices. We expect the Commission to take the recent European Court of Justice judgment into account in preparing new proposals for liberalising air transport.

45. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for European integration of the latest ruling by the European Court of Justice on air transport fares.

Mrs. Chalker: We would expect the Commission to take full account of the recent European Court of Justice ruling on air fares in preparing proposals for the second phase of air transport liberalisation. The United Kingdom fully supports further liberalisation in this field, because of the great practical benefits it will bring, especially to consumers.

Air Transport

49. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the European Economic Community to make further progress in liberalising air transport.

Mrs. Chalker: The aviation liberalisation package of December 1987 commits the Council of Ministers to adopt further measures by June 1990. The Commission has to bring forward proposals by 1 November this year. The United Kingdom's support for further effective measures

has been made clear in a memorandum to the Commission. A copy of this has been placed in the Library of the House.

El Salvador

32. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether the human rights situation in El Salvador is improving.

Mr. Eggar: Regrettably, recent months have seen a deterioration in the human rights situation in El Salvador.

We are particularly concerned that the escalation of violence and violation of human rights by the FMLN guerrillas appears to be provoking a response from extreme elements on the Right.

European Monetary and Economic Union

33. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet Mr. Jacques Delors to discuss the findings of the Delors committee on the European monetary and economic union.

Mrs. Chalker: The report of the Delors committee will be discussed at the informal meeting of Economic and Finance Ministers in Gerona on 19 to 21 May at which I understand M. Delors will be present.

Kurdish People

34. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Iraqi regime over its policy of repression against its Kurdish citizens.

81. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Iraq concerning their treatment of Kurdish people.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have regularly raised with the Iraqi authorities our concerns over their Kurdish population and human rights violations against the community.

Most recently I did so with the Iraqi ambassador on 19 April, and in particular made clear that we would view with grave concern any evidence to support recent reports of mass deportations of Kurds.

We have urged the Iraqi Government to allow diplomats and journalists to visit Iraq to see for themselves.

Brady Plan

35. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Third world countries on the proposals in the Brady plan to relieve international debt.

Mrs. Chalker: There has been general interest among both debtors and creditors in the United States proposals. We are examining the possible involvement of the international financial institutions in debt and debt service reduction. The discussion will continue further in the boards of the IMF and World Bank.

Protection of the Environment

36. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is undertaking to enhance United Nations co-operation on protection of the environment.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the focus for environmental co-operation within the United Nations. We recently more than doubled our voluntary financial contribution to UNEP, and are now the second largest contributor. We urge all other countries to take similar action and will reinforce this at the UNEP governing council on 15 to 26 May.

Hong Kong

38. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of China concerning the future of Hong Kong.

57. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of China concerning the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave on 5 April at column *195*.

73. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received about the future of British nationals overseas living in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have recently received a number of representations from hon. Members and from members of the public both here and in Hong Kong. We have also taken note of the views expressed during the hearings held in Hong Kong last month by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

74. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to visit Hong Kong to discuss the arrangements for implementing the 1977 agreement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has at present no plans to visit Hong Kong.

Lebanon

39. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom policy towards the restoration of peace in the Lebanon.

42. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government policy on the establishment of peace in the Lebanon.

63. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British policy on the restoration of peace in the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We hope that all parties concerned in the fighting will work towards a peaceful settlement. We

and our European partners fully support the efforts of the Arab League to arrange a ceasefire and to help in achieving a negotiated solution.

Central America

40. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Government of the United States of America to discuss central America.

Mr. Eggar: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration on a wide variety of topics, including central America.

South Africa

41. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment has he made of the effectiveness of his policy of ending apartheid in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to his identical question on 3 February 1988 at column 965. Our assessment remains unchanged.

71. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the South African Foreign Minister.

76. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the South African ambassador; and what matters will be discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no present plans to do so.

West Germany

44. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet representatives of the West German Government; and what matters will be discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet Dr. Wolfgang Schauble, the Federal German Minister of the Interior on 18 May when he visits this country to participate in a conference marking the 40th anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany. A range of subjects of mutual interest will be discussed.

Southern Africa

46. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to visit southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no current plans to visit southern Africa.

United States

47. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Government of the United States; and what subjects were discussed.

79. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of his visit to the United States on 17 April.

Mr. Eggar: When I met President Bush in Washington on 17 April we discussed a number of current issues including East-West relations, SNF, the middle east, Lebanon, southern Africa and Latin America.

Refuseniks

48. **Mr. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made on the current position of refuseniks in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

84. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made on the current position of refuseniks in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have raised the problem of refuseniks with Mr. Shevardnadze on three separate occasions this year, most recently during Mr. Gorbachev's visit. The Soviet authorities have been left in no doubt that the problem of long-term refuseniks will continue to cast a shadow over Anglo-Soviet relations until a satisfactory and lasting solution is reached.

Vietnamese Refugees

51. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the conditions under which Vietnamese refugees are being held in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: We have received a number of representations from members of the public and some voluntary organisations about conditions in the centres for Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong.

Both we and the Hong Kong Government attach great importance to ensuring that conditions in these centres are as good as they can be in the circumstances.

Conditions in the centres for those categorised as refugees have already been liberalised but the recent flood of new arrivals is putting the facilities available for those awaiting screening under great strain.

Sri Lanka and India

52. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit *(a)* Sri Lanka and *(b)* India.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no plans at present to visit Sri Lanka. He was in India from 28 March to 1 April.

Turkey

53. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what fresh initiatives he plans to seek to reduce human rights violations in Turkey.

Mrs. Chalker: The Turkish Government are aware that we expect them to respect and abide by the terms and conditions of the human rights conventions to which they are parties. We shall continue to follow developments closely.

Conventional Arms Reductions

54. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations towards conventional arms reductions in Europe.

55. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards conventional arms reductions in Europe.

60. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations towards conventional arms reductions in Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO/Warsaw pact negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe (CFE) opened in Vienna on 9 March. The first round was encouraging. The atmosphere was serious and constructive with the Warsaw pact apparently willing to negotiate seriously and to find common ground. Much complex negotiation lies ahead. The second round began on 5 May.

Horn of Africa

58. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for peace in the Horn of Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: While the parties to the conflicts in Ethiopia and Somalia maintain their present positions, there seems little prospect for peace in the Horn of Africa. Our policy is to work for negotiated solutions, internal reconciliation, improved economic management and greater respect for human rights.

Human Rights

61. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the maintaining of progress in establishing human rights in eastern Europe.

70. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Monitoring of progress on the establishment of human rights in eastern Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: Performance is varied. Hungary and Poland are continuing to take measures to improve human rights and political freedoms. There has been little or no improvement in Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia or the GDR. Romania is, I am sorry to say, in a class of its own.

East-West Relations

64. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he proposes to hold with NATO colleagues on East-West relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are in close and constant touch with our NATO colleagues over East-West policy. We share a broad measure of agreement in our analysis of the present situation and of the way forward.

Commonwealth Citizens (Admission)

66. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commmonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Indian Government on the admission of citizens from Commonwealth countries to the United Kingdom for holidays or short stays and the need to ensure that appropriate flexibility is allowed to help cases where such citizens wish to visit Britain urgently because of the chronic illness or death of a relative resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Chemical Weapons

67. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards an agreement on a worldwide ban on chemical weapons.

77. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards an agreement on a worldwide ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 9 May.

Cyprus

68. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the present position in Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met the United Nations Secretary-General in Tokyo on 25 February. During their discussion they reviewed progress in the intercommunal talks on Cyprus. The talks continue, with our full support.

Single Market

69. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what ways the European Community and the European Free Trade Association are working together towards the development of the single market.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom believes that the EFTA countries should, as far as is practicable and mutually beneficial, have access to the single market. The programme of EC/EFTA co-operation initiated by the Luxembourg declaration of 1984 is continuing. Following a joint ministerial meeting on 20 March, the Commission is exploring with EFTA options for further extending co-operation. A further ministerial meeting is planned for the autumn.

Eastern Europe (Reforms)

72. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage a unified western response to the reforms taking place in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are in constant touch, bilaterally and multilaterally, with our allies over East-West policy. There is a broad agreement on analysis of the situation in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and on the way forward.

Prime Minister Shamir

80. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the principal matters Her Majesty's Government intend to discuss with Prime Minister Shamir of Israel when he visits the United Kingdom in May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We look forward to discussing a wide range of bilateral and regional issues, including all aspects of the peace process, with Mr. Shamir.

EC Summit (Madrid)

82. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what current discussions he is holding with his European Economic Community counterparts on preparations for the forthcoming European Economic Community summit meeting of Heads of Government in Madrid.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for the Spanish presidency to make the preparations for the European Council in June. The agenda will be discussed in advance in the Foreign Affairs Council in the usual way. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State discusses current items of Community business with his colleagues in the Council and at other meetings.

EC Foreign Ministers

83. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he is next due to meet other European Community foreign Ministers: and what matters will be discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: The next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council is on 22 and 23 May. Matters for discussion include preparation for the EC/Israel Co-operation Council; preparation for the ACP/EC ministerial meeting in June; the EC-US dispute over hormones in meat; the GATT Uruguay round (Tropical Products); a draft mandate for negotiations with the USSR on a trade agreement; and preparation for the OECD ministerial meeting at the end of May. An EC/Israel Co-operation Council will be held in the margins of the Council.

Development Assistance

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what was the total value of the United Kingdom overseas development assistance in 1979-80, and in 1988-89 at constant 1979 prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: The United Kingdom net aid programme in 1979-80 was £798 million. The equivalent figure for 1987-88, at 1979-80 prices, was £700 million. The figure for 1988-89 is not yet available.

Councils of Ministers

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the number and character of Council of Ministers meetings in each of the past two years, *(b)* the Ministers who represented the United Kingdom by Department and *(c)* by Department and grade of the civil servants who attended.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested at *(a)* and *(b)* is provided in the relevant six-monthly White Papers on developments in the European Community, copies of which are deposited in the Library of the House. But details of attendance by civil servants by Department and grade could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Antarctic Treaty

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he plans to hold with the co-signatories to the antarctic treaty about its review option in 1991.

Mr. Eggar: Ther are no plans to hold discussions on this issue.

DEFENCE

Exercises

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Royal Air Force participation in *(a)* Red Flag, *(b)* Green Flag, *(c)* Copper Flag and *(d)* Maple Flag exercises during 1988, giving the number and type of Royal Air Force aircraft involved and the dates of the exercises on each occasion.

Mr. Neubert: The Royal Air Force did not participate in Copper Flag exercises during 1988. Otherwise the information requested is as follows:

Date	*Aircraft involved*
Royal Air Force participation in Red Flag exercises	
8 October to 19 November 1988	Nine Tornado Eight Phantom Two Hercules
Royal Air Force participation in Green Flag exercises	
15 March to 16 April 1988	Nine Tornado
Royal Air Force participation in Maple Flag exercises	
30 April to 11 June 1988	Eight Harrier

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on planned RAF participation in the Maple Flag exercise in Canada in 1989.

Mr. Neubert: Nine Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft are currently participating in Exercise Maple Flag at Canadian forces base, Cold Lake, Alberta.

NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a decision to be made on the location of the proposed NATO tactical fighter weapons training centre.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), on 22 April 1987 at column *583*. The matter is still being studied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Goose Bay, Canada

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many low-level sorties were carried out by the RAF from Goose bay, Canada in 1988;

(2) what is the planned number of sorties to be conducted by RAF aircraft on training detachment to Goose bay, Canada during 1989.

Mr. Neubert: The total number of low-flying training sorties carried out by Royal Air Force aircraft from Goose bay, Canada in 1988 was 1,423. It is not expected that the amount of activity in 1989 will vary greatly from that carried out in recent years.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Tornado aircraft are currently deployed at Goose bay, Canada; on what date they arrived there; and what is their planned date of return to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: None at present.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total number of military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in 1988 was accounted for by *(a)* fast jets, *(b)* light jet trainers, *(c)* heavy propeller-driven aircraft, *(d)* light propeller-driven aircraft and *(c)* helicopters.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is as follows:

Category	*Proportion of sorties flown Per cent.*
Fast jets	59
Light jet trainers	9
Heavy propeller-driven aircraft	2
Light propeller-driven aircraft	1
Helicopters	29

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total numbers of complaints received about low flying in 1988 from addresses in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Neubert: No fixed-wing low flying training is carried out in Northern Ireland. However, helicopters do undertake low-flying operations in Northern Ireland and although no central records are available of complaints received, headquarters Northern Ireland received 38 complaints in 1988. The numbers of complaints and inquiries about military low flying received by the Ministry of Defence during 1988 for the remaining areas were:

	Number
England	3,955
Wales	856
Scotland	875

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the percentage change in the number of low-level flights authorised at less than 250 ft between 1979 and 1980.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my predecessor gave him on 2 November 1987 at column *487*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying sorties were flown over the United Kingdom by United States F-111 and EF-111 aircraft in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Neubert: United States Air Force F-111 aircraft flew 11,147 low-flying sorties during 1987 and 11,303 during 1988. Central records are not kept separately of low-flying sorties by EF-111 aircraft.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties flown over the United Kingdom between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is not available. Central records of night low-flying do not separately distinguish flying between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am. It is aimed to complete low-flying training before 11 pm wherever possible because it is recognised that aircraft noise can be particularly intrusive at night, and no more such activity is authorised than is necessary.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown over the Federal Republic of Germany by RAF aircraft in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: Royal Air Force Germany carried out some 16,000 fixed-wing low-level sorties over the Federal Republic of Germany in 1988.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the aircrew in front-line RAF Tornado strike/attack squadrons is currently authorised to fly at less than 250 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing further to add to my predecessor's letter of 15 December 1987 to the hon. Member in response to his question of 2 November 1987 at column *486*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the names and dates of all military air exercises held in the United Kingdom since 1974 in which flying at less than 250 ft was permitted over land.

Mr. Neubert: Military air exercise held in the United Kingdom do not involve the use of the United Kingdom low-flying system for flying below a level of 250 ft over land. Exercises involving ultra-low flying, that is below this and down to 100 ft, are normally held in the United States of America and Canada. Some strictly limited work-up training for these exercises does take place in the United Kingdom but within specially designated, sparsely populated areas.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom in 1988, calculated by the pre-1985 method of logging movements between low flying areas.

Mr. Neubert: The approximate total number of sorties flown, as recalculated from movements by the pre-1985 method, was 127,000.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of RAF Germany low-flying training activity has been carried out in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Precise figures are not available prior to 1988. It is estimated that some 20 per cent. of RAF Germany fixed-wing low-level sorties made use of the United Kingdom low-flying system in 1988.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-flying sorties over *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my predecessor gave him in response to a similar question on 15 April 1988 at column *249*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the low-level sorties over the United Kingdom in 1988 were flown by *(a)* British military aircraft, *(b)* the United States Air Force aircraft and *(c)* other air forces.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is as follows:

Operating Authority	*Proportion of sorties flown Per cent.*
British Military	84
United States Air Force	15
Others	1

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requests have been received from foreign air forces for permission to fly in the United Kingdom low-flying system at less than 250 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Neubert: There are no records of foreign military aircraft having been authorised to carry out low-flying training in the United Kingdom at less than 250 ft or of any formal request having been made for such training.

Advertising

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total budget for advertising on the armed forces, showing separately the cost of advertising of the Territorial Army for 1989-90.

Mr. Neubert: The information is as follows:

	£
Royal Navy/ Royal Marines	4,965,000
Army	9,405,000
Royal Air Force	5,891,000

The figure for the Army includes our current estimate for the cost of advertising for the Territorial Army for 1989-90 which is £2,403,000. This sum excludes local advertising expenditure commissioned by TA Voluntary Reserve associations who make their own allocations from a block grant received from the Ministry of Defence.

Port of London

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is any military function performed by courtesy calls by naval vessels to the port of London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: So far as Royal Navy vessels are concerned, such visits are arranged to foster good relations between the Royal Navy and the civil community. Foreign warship visits to the Pool of London are tangible expressions of mutual goodwill between the United Kingdom and the Governments concerned.

Thames (Naval Accidents)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will outline the plans prepared for the possibility of a naval accident on the Thames, in particular accidents which may affect vessels carrying nuclear weapons;

(2) what special steps he takes to reassure people living in London, particularly by the Thames, in relation to the safety implications of the mooring at Greenwich or HMS Belfast of naval ships carrying nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the policy of successive British Governments neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons on HM ships. There are, however, detailed contingency plans for dealing with the extremely remote possibility of an accident involving the release of radioactive material from a weapon while in the custody of the Royal Navy, and these include plans to deal with such an accident on board a warship. The plans involve similar organisational arrangements to those which would apply in the event of an accident involving a naval nuclear propulsion reactor, and are designed to enable the organisations concerned to cope with the rather different technical problems that would be faced in a weapons accident.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by the armed services in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for them by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The armed services' publicity campaigns are primarily concerned with recruitment. They are not a series of separate campaigns but rather a continuing campaign to keep the services in the public eye and to promote them, to both parents and young people, as a potential employer.

The impact of the campaign is continuously monitored. Adjustments are made in reaction to the response from the target audience and to reflect the manpower requirements of the services. There are no plans to change this practice in the foreseeable future but, in response to the increased competition for suitable applicants which all employers are likely to experience with the onset of the demographic trough, the services do expect to increase the level of advertising over that of recent years.

In addition to their recruiting campaign, the armed services are also sponsoring the national employers liaison committee's publicity campaign, the main aim of which is to promote public awareness of the reserve forces especially amongst employers.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The aim of the Ministry of Defence's public information effort is to increase public awareness of defence policies and the role and achievements of the armed forces.

This is achieved by a continuous information programme of press briefings and media visits to establishments and service units, films, exhibitions, and publications. Emphasis is given in this programme from time to time to matters of particular public interest and to specific occasions. These have included the European Year of the Environment in 1988, to which the Ministry of Defence contributed, and the 40th anniversary of NATO in 1989. The latter occasion was marked by an exhibition on British defence policy held in London in April, which is also due to visit several regional events later this summer, a NATO briefing tour of public meetings in six major towns and cities, and the issue of a special postal slogan.

The Central Office of Information was commissioned to undertake a market research survey on the MOD touring defence policy exhibition in 1988 and reported most favourably on its content and on the public response.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 11 May 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

War Loan

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates to be *(a)* the number of surviving holders of three per cent. war loan who purchased the stock when it was issued and *(b)* the total nominal value of the stock held by them.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information is not readily available in the form requested.

Crombie Rules

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library the Crombie set of rules on the Civil Service.

Mr. Brooke: There is no Crombie set of rules on the Civil Service. However, I am writing to the hon. Member with details of the compensation terms, known as the Crombie code, which applied widely in the public sector from 1947 for those who became redundant as a result of nationalisation or statutory reorganisations. As the House was told on 3 July 1980 (*Official Report*, column 1823), the need for the Crombie code has long since ceased to exist.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Open University

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on what research is currently conducted by the open university at its central Milton Keynes campus and its regions, sponsored from the central annual grant to the university.

Mr. Jackson: It is for the open university to decide how much of its recurrent grant should be spent on research. In 1988-89 over £8 million was spent from recurrent grant; this is in addition to funding received from the research councils, DES research grants and other sources. Areas of research cover science and technology, social sciences, arts and humanities and involve both specific research projects and support for academic activity. The open university provides information on its research to the OU visiting committee which advises Ministers on all aspects of the university's work.

Teachers

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress he has made on his proposals for the reform of the non-standard routes to qualified teacher status; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is today issuing draft regulations and a draft explanatory circular. Subject to the outcome of consultation on these, he plans to lay regulations before the House with a view to having the new arrangements in place by September.

The revised regulations replace the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 and are concerned, among other things, with new arrangements for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS), including the licensed teacher scheme; the specialist qualifications needed for teaching hearing or visually impaired pupils; the probationary service of qualified teachers; and the implementation of the European Community directive on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, as it applies to teachers.

The draft regulations and circular have benefited from responses to the consultation document on the reform of the routes to QTS which was issued last year.

The majority of those responding to that document supported the principle of the reform. My right hon. Friend is confident that the proposed new arrangements will provide a better framework within which to recruit and train the teachers in our schools in the 1990s.

Copies of the draft regulations and circular have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENERGY

Safeguards Agreement

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representation his Department had at the latest large scale reprocessing plant safeguards meeting held recently at Sellafield with representatives from Japan, the United States of America, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the safeguards directorates of Euratom and the International Atomic Energy Agency; and what papers have so far been presented to the LASCAR meeting by United Kingdom representatives.

Mr. Michael Spicer: One member of the Safeguards Office attended the meeting held between 27 February—3 March at Sellafield to consider large-scale commercial reprocessing plant safeguards (LASCAR). The information exchanged at LASCAR meetings is confidential to the parties involved.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what actions have been taken to improve nuclear safety nationally and internationally by Her Majesty's Government since the Chernobyl accident on 26 April 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom has maintained a high level of safety over 30 years of civil nuclear power production. The Government are committed to continuing this and have made available the resources to ensure it.

On plans for dealing with a possible nuclear accident in the United Kingdom, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnyd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 12 December 1988 at column 391.

Internationally, the United Kingdom has encouraged the exchange of information and ideas on nuclear safety, in particular between operators and between regulators. The International Atomic Energy Agency is the prime

forum for such exchange, but there have also been bilateral exchanges; Her Majesty's chief inspector of nuclear installations last month visited Moscow for meetings with his Russian counterpart.

There have been IAEA and EC initiatives on actions to be followed in the event of nuclear accidents. Two IAEA conventions—on the early notification of nuclear accidents and on mutual assistance in the case of a nuclear accident—were concluded in 1986. Similar arrangements for the notification of accidents have been agreed within the EC and the United Kingdom has bilateral agreements with a number of countries. Member states of the EC have agreed other measures to be implemented in the event of an accident, such as those on the contamination of foodstuffs.

As further encouragement for the international exchange of safety awareness and information, the World Association of Nuclear Operators has been formed, and will meet later this month in Moscow under the chairmanship of Lord Marshall of Goring.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what departmental representation including papers for presentation, will be made at the eleventh annual symposium on safeguards and nuclear material management in Luxembourg on 30 May to 1 June 1989.

Mr. Michael Spicer: One member of my Department will be attending the symposium.

Pacific Sandpiper

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West, *Official Report*, 23 March, column *763*, on the cargo carried by the PNTL ship Pacific Sandpiper, why section 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 was not applicable; and from which country had the consignment of irradiated fuel elements originated.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Details of individual consignments are confidential. Section 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 was not applicable as the nuclear material in this consignment was neither enriched nor reprocessed in the United Kingdom.

Piper Alpha

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to monitor heavy metal and other toxic substances from Piper Alpha.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave on 8 December 1988 to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), and to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 11 January 1989, and to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) on 3 May 1989.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, in co-operation with the operators, Occidental Petroleum (Caledonia) Ltd, has been monitoring debris and other samples from the vicinity of the site of Piper Alpha for polychlorinated biphenyls and radioactivity. A report on this work will be published shortly.

In addition, conditions attached to the abandonment programme for Piper Alpha approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy include requirements for surveys of the toppled remains and surrounding sea-bed to establish the position of debris and to monitor for leakage of oil or gas. They also require samples of sediment, sea-water and fish to be obtained and examined for the presence of PCBs and radioactivity. The conditions provide for repetition of these surveys and sampling at such times as the Secretary of State may subsequently direct. An assessment of the surveys carried out under the abandonment programme will be published in due course.

Occidental have also arranged to have portions of the samples referred to above examined for the presence of heavy metals originating from past drilling discharges. This work is being carried out to check predictions, made on the basis of sampling around other platforms, that the levels of heavy metals present are not hazardous to marine life. These results will also be made available to Her Majesty's Government.

WALES

Public Bodies

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the chairmen and members of all the public bodies to which he appoints in Wales, together with their salaries and expenses.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Pollution (Irish Sea)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received this year about the pollution levels in the Irish sea; and what new steps he is taking to respond to this problem.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Friday 28 April at column *253*.

Valleys Initiative

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether in commissioning the Community Projects Foundation to undertake community development projects as part of the valleys initiative the opportunity was given for suitable agencies based in Wales to compete for the contract.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have not awarded a contract to the Community Projects Foundation. Welsh Office support for the foundation's activities in the valleys is being provided under the urban programme following the submission of applications by local authorities in the normal way. It is open to all voluntary bodies to seek urban programme assistance for appropriate schemes and I see no need for any separate bidding process in relation to community development. The hon. Gentleman may wish to note that the foundation was active in Wales prior to the launch of the valleys programme.

Chemical Laboratories, Aberystwyth

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on the basis of how many job losses the changes currently

being considered for the regional analytical chemistry laboratories at Aberystwyth are founded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

There are currently 16 permanent staff in post in the ADAS analytical chemistry laboratory at Trawsgoed, whose closure in 1990-91 was announced on 21 March 1989. The number of post losses consequent on closure of this laboratory will depend on a range of factors, including the future level of demand for ADAS laboratory services elsewhere and the outcome of the examination being given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to the possibility of alternative uses for this facility.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC (Right of Settlement)

78. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement setting out the overseas territories of EEC countries whose inhabitants have the right of settlement in the EEC; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: EC nationals have the right to reside in the other member states of the Community in accordance with the Treaties. It is for each Member State to define who are its own nationals for Community purposes. The provisions of the EC treaty relating to the free movement of persons apply to European territories for whose external relations a member state is responsible, such as Gibraltar. Citizens of the following overseas territories are also defined as nationals by the member states concerned:

United Kingdom	—Falkland Islands
France	—St. Pierre et Miquelon, Mayotte and the overseas Departments and Territories
Netherlands	—Aruba
	—Netherlands Antilles
Portugal	—Macau

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding recent reports that a boatload of 130 Vietnamese refugees were killed in mid-April by Thai pirates.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which administers the anti-piracy programme in Thailand, and the Thai authorities, regularly provide the international community with information on the number and nature of piracy attacks. Other than reports in the press, however, we have no details of this particular alleged attack.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government have taken to persuade the Government of Thailand to bring to justice the pirates responsible for the murder in April of 130 Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Waldegrave: We co-operate closely with the Royal Thai Government through its anti-piracy programme, which is administered by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and to which the United Kingdom contributes.

Iran

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation he is having with other Governments on the latest Iranian threat to citizens of western countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my remarks in the House on 10 May at column 850.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any meeting with representatives of 20-20 Vision concerning their programme alleging that nuclear materials in the European Community under safeguards, have been diverted to a black market in Sudan.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The private secretary to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary wrote to Ms. Claudia Milne of 20-20 Vision on 3 February 1988, inviting her to contact the appropriate official with a view to arranging a meeting. As far as we are aware, Ms. Milne has never taken up the invitation.

United Nations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make monthly reports to Parliament, when in session, on developments and United Kingdom votes at the United Nations in New York.

Mr. Waldegrave: A very large number of United Nations bodies meet in New York at various times throughout the year. These include the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. For the Government to submit regular reports on developments and positions adopted by the United Kingdom in all these bodies would take disproportionate time and resources. The United Nations itself publishes full and publicly available accounts of the work of its bodies. On major political issues, it is of course already our policy to keep the House fully informed of all developments, including those at the United Nations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the annual contribution made by the United Kingdom to the central funds of the United Nations, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our contribution to the United Nations regular budget for the ten financial years beginning 1979-80 has been as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	10·39
1980-81	10·32
1981-82	14·02
1982-83	15·71
1983-84	18·50
1984-85	23·34
1985-86	24·63
1986-87	23·62
1987-88	21·49
1988-89	19·36

The sharp fluctuations in these sterling payments reflect changes in the pound/dollar exchange rate.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what rent has been received over the past 10 years from United Nations agencies based in London.

Mr. Waldegrave: The International Maritime Organisation is the only United Nations agency based in the United Kingdom. Prior to 1982, the IMO paid rent to three separate private landlords. On 29 October 1982, when it moved into its present accommodation, the IMO began to pay rent. The rent paid (in equal quarterly instalments) since then is as follows:

October	*£*
1982-83	500,000
1983-84	500,000
1984-85	550,000
1985-86	550,000
1986-87	600,000
1987-88	600,000
1988-89	[1]325,000

[1] Two instalments.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Nations agencies have their headquarters in the United Kingdom; where they are based; and how long they have been established in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: The only United Nations specialised agency to have its headquarters in the United Kingdom is the International Maritime Organisation, which has been based in London since its establishment in 1959.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis United Nations agencies located in London are charged rent; and what information he has on comparable levels of rent charged by France, the United States of America, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Kenya for United Nations agencies based in those countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1977, we and the International Maritime Organisation agreed that the rent for the organisation's headquarters building in London would be 12 per cent. of the capital cost of the building, but that we would reimburse the organisation a sum equivalent to 80 per cent. of that amount. Following transitional rent arrangements set out in my earlier reply of today's date, this agreement comes into force in 1990. From then the annual rent payable by IMO, net of the 80 per cent. reimbursement by Her Majesty's Government, will be £1,195,751 per annum.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the likely timetable to set up an amendment conference for the partial nuclear test ban treaty of 1963, following the deposition recently of the requisite number of signatory states calling for such a conference; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the prospective conversion of the treaty into a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had initial discussions with the other depositary Governments to consider preparations for an amendment conference. No timetable has yet been established. We cannot support the proposed amendment: as long as we rely on a nuclear deterrent, we will need to conduct underground nuclear tests to ensure that our weapons remain effective and up-to-date. But we will of course carry out fully our obligations as a depositary Government.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the United Kingdom has had recently over the current status of the 1963 partial test ban treaty with its depository states.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have had initial discussions with both the other depositary Governments in order to begin preparations for convening a conference to consider proposals for an amendment to the treaty. We hope that the depositary Governments will soon meet trilaterally to resolve how this should be taken forward.

Arms Control

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last held a meeting with non-governmental organisations on arms control and disarmament issues; what non-governmental organisations were present; which subjects were covered; and if financial support was offered to the non-governmental organisations to help defray expenses in attending the meeting.

Mr. Waldegrave: I held a meeting with non-governmental organisations interested in arms control and disarmament issues on 24 April. The following topics were covered at the meeting: SNF, nuclear non-proliferation, modernisation, the partial test ban treaty, conventional arms control, chemical weapons, international arms transfers, and East-West relations.

The following organisations took part: the Council for Education in World Citizenship, Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, the European Atlantic Movement, the National Peace Council, the Oxford Research Group, Peace Through NATO, Quaker Peace and Service, Scientists Against Nuclear Arms, the United Nations Association, Verification Technology Information Centre, the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Disarmament Campaign, International Peace Bureau, European Proliferation Information Centre, British Atlantic Committee, British Council of Churches, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Centre for International Peace Building Studies, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Coalition for Peace Through Security, Committee for International Justice and Peace, Council for Arms Control, Council on Christian approaches to Defence and Disarmament.

No financial support was offered to representatives attending the meeting.

Soviet Union (Weapons)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each category of weapon of which there is deemed a Soviet surplus, giving his definition of how any particular quantity of weapons is so judged; and if he will set out his source of information on Soviet weapon capacity in so far as national security permits

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the NATO booklet: "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts" which was published on 25 November last year and which was then placed in the Library of the House.

Iraq (Chemical Protection Suits)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom has supplied Iraq with chemical protection suits.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

TRANSPORT

InterCity Trains (Overcrowding)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about overcrowding on InterCity trains in the western region *(a)* during 1987, *(b)* during 1988 and *(c)* to date during 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Loadings on InterCity trains are a matter for BR management. Although I regularly receive representations on InterCity rail services, the Department does not keep statistics of them.

Addingham Bypass

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects construction of the A65 Addingham bypass to commence; and what is the anticipated construction period.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction of the bypass is due to start in late June and should be completed by the end of 1990.

DVLC (Data Sales)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what data on motor vehicles the driver and vehicle licensing centre currently sells to outside bodies; and what it receives as a result of these transactions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Apart from the information the DVLC is required to provide under regulation 15 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971 either at no charge or at the prescribed fee of £3·50, certain other non-personal statistical information is supplied at charges set in accordance with standard Government accounting guidelines, in these instances normally set to recover costs.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to seek any necessary changes in the law to enable the driver and vehicle licensing centre to collect any extra data on motor vehicles which could then be sold to interested parties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not at present: there are no plans to collect any extra data, nor to change the law to enable this to be done.

DVLC (Ventures)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new arrangements will be made to allow the driver and vehicle licensing centre to undertake profitable ventures.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: DVLC already provides certain designated services at charges set in accordance with standard Government accounting guidelines issued to Government Departments. There are no planned changes.

Taxi and Private Hire Car (Legislation)

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has concluded his review of taxi and private hire car legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Last year the Department of Transport completed an internal review of taxi and private hire vehicle legislation for England and Wales. My predecessor invited comments from the taxi and PHV trades, licensing authorities and consumer bodies on problems and possible solutions. Specific areas for discussion included the distinction between taxis and hire cars, vehicle design, knowledge examinations, quantity control and fares. I am most grateful for all the responses sent to the Department; we have studied all of them very carefully.

The Transport Act 1985 introduced changes outside London designed to increase business opportunities and to limit the restrictions on entry into the taxi trade. I am disappointed that some district councils still appear to be rationing the issue of taxi licences, which distorts competition and interferes with the operation of a free market. The Act clearly states the exceptional circum stances in which quantity control may be considered, and licensing authorities should look very carefully at all evidence on supply and demand, not least the price at which existing licences change hands, before restricting the issue of licences. I believe that more time should be allowed for the new opportunities introduced by the 1985 Act to develop, and I have concluded that it is too early to propose further legislation. I would also remind applicants for licences that the 1985 Act already makes provision for appeal to the courts against unreasonable decisions by a licensing authority, and I am not convinced that the full scope of action in the courts has yet been explored.

In the case of London, it has become clear that the high standards of service and propriety offered by taxis are highly valued by respondents and the public. London passengers enjoy a quality of service based on purpose-built vehicles developed to enhance driver and passenger comfort. Their roadworthiness and cleanliness are ensured by standards set by the Public Carriage Office, and drivers must pass through rigorous driver testing. I therefore do not propose to legislate to change the present arrangements concerning the black cab or the knowledge of London examination. Neither do I intend to alter the present distinction between the taxi and hire car trades.

Since 1980, the fares chargeable by London taxis have been adjusted by reference to an index of cost changes in the previous year. This index reflects the movement of earnings and the range of costs involved in cab ownership and operation, including replacement parts, garaging and servicing, fuel, insurance, depreciation etc. In line with the movement in that index last year, from 9 June 1989 the maximum fares chargeable by London taxis will increase by an average of 11·1 per cent. This rise takes into account, among other things, the increase in quality of new taxis coming into service and higher costs associated with the requirement that new taxis be accessible to passengers in wheelchairs. I have today made an order increasing London taxi fares with effect from Friday 9 June 1989.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Deterrent

Q28. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding the nuclear deterrent.

Q38. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding the nuclear deterrent.

Q208. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding the nuclear deterrent.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of letters from individuals and organisations.

Economy

Q32. **Mr. Malins:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding the performance of the economy.

Q119. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received regarding the performance of the economy.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations. Thanks to the policies we have pursued for the last 10 years, and will continue to pursue, the economy is performing exceptionally well.

Rain Forests

Q74. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the reply of 18 April, *Official Report*, column 183, given by the Lord President on her behalf, whether she will make it her policy to meet any Brazilian request for the supply of four large cargo and two personnel carrying helicopters to assist in the rain forest protection programme.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave him on 10 April, at column *344*. The further assistance which we are currently discussing with the Brazilian Government with respect to the protection of the rainforests is likely to be in the area of technical co-operation rather than capital aid for equipment like helicopters.

UK 2000

Q94. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the achievements of UK 2000; and what assessment she has made of the contribution to its work made by Mr. Richard Branson.

The Prime Minister: Since its establishment in July 1986 UK 2000 has met all the targets set for it each year by Government. In 1988-89 UK 2000 supported over 700 environmental projects involving well over 80,000 volunteer days and 6,000 trainees. Total Government grant was exceeded by sponsorship from the private sector and about 350 new long-term jobs were created.

Mr. Richard Branson's active commitment to UK 2000 has greatly assisted the initiative. His expertise remains available because of his continuing involvement as president.

European Monetary Union

Q126. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the proposals of the Commission on monetary union; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Council announced at Hanover last June that it would discuss the question of economic and monetary union at its meeting in Madrid on 26-27 June 1989, on the basis of the report that it commissioned from a committee chaired by Monsieur Delors.

Environmental Pollution (Mountain Ash)

Q173. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on environmental pollution at Mountain Ash.

The Prime Minister: I am fully aware of local feeling about pollution from the Phurnacite plant, Aberaman.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if, in her recent discussions with President Gorbachev, she raised the right of self-determination of the Baltic states; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I did not raise this specific issue with President Gorbachev. But the Soviet authorities are well aware that we have never recognised de jure the forcible incorporation of the former Baltic states into the Soviet. We are encouraged by recent signs that the Baltic peoples are increasingly able to express their views about their own future. We hope that this process will continue.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister when she last specifically raised the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with a visiting head of state or Government or during her visits abroad.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raises the NPT and related issues whenever a suitable opportunity arises. The subject of the treaty has not however been included on the agenda for any talks that I have had recently.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her meeting with the Prime Minister of Italy on 28 April 1989 in London, she raised the issues of *(a)* the first preparatory committee for the non-proliferation treaty review conference in New York on 1 to 5 May, and *(b)* the possibilities for new proposals at the 1990 non-proliferation treaty review conference.

The Prime Minister: No.

European Language

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what is her policy towards the promotion by the European Community of an officially approved single language throughout Europe.

The Prime Minister: I know of no such proposal. The strength of Europe lies in the diversity of its cultural and historical traditions.

Engagements

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 11 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a Banquet given by President Babangida.

Official Historian

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will consider appointing an official historian for the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Children (World Conference)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will support a world conference for children to be organised by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund as proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: The Government are currently considering whether to support this proposed conference on the basis of tentative proposals prepared by UNICEF at the end of the executive board meeting in April.

SOCIAL SECURITY

18-year-olds (Help and Support)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to provide help and support for 18-year-olds who are leaving care.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Eighteen-year-olds leaving care can qualify for income support and housing benefit, and for community charge rebates in Scotland, in the normal way. In addition, from July we propose to disregard totally any payments to young people who have been in care made by

local authorities under section 27 and 29 of the Child Care Act 1980 (or sections 24 and 26 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968).

Temple Row House, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security since what date his Department has rented Temple row house, Soho road, Birmingham, for use as a local office; what is the current rental; and to whom it is payable.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department has rented Temple Row house, Soho road, Birmingham, for use as a local office since 2 March 1972. The current rental is £17,607·17 per annum, payable to Standard Securities plc, 5 Commercial street, Birmingham B1 1RS.

Community Charge

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what sum is included in income support to assist with the minimum 20 per cent. community charge payment for those who will receive the maximum 80 per cent. community charge rebate; what arrangements will be made to increase this sum in line with increases in community charge; for how many people he estimates this sum will be more than the minimum 20 per cent. they have to pay; and for how many people this sum will be less than the minimum 20 per cent. they have to pay.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amounts which have been included in income support levels from April to help meet the minimum 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge are £1·15 a week for single people aged 18 to 24, £1·30 a week for single people aged 25 or over, and £2·30 a week for couples. This was a once-and-for-all adjustment and future increases in the overall benefit levels will be made in the normal way.

It is not possible to provide estimates of the number of cases where the amounts included in income support will be higher or lower than the actual community charge levels in advance of these levels being set.

Pensioner Incomes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the overall increase in pensioner incomes in real terms by quintile group for each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 March 1989]:* The table shows the requested information for pensioner tax units using *(a)* net income and *(b)* equivalised net income.

Real changes in pensioner incomes by quintile (Percentage)

	1979 to 1980	*1980 to 1981*	*1981 to 1982*	*1982 to 1983*	*1983 to 1984*	*1984 to 1985*	*1985 to 1986*	*1979 to 1986*
(a) Net income Quintile								
Lowest Q1	4	4	2	6	2	−1	1	20
Q2	2	6	3	6	1	0	2	23
Q3	1	6	2	7	−1	1	3	21
Q4	2	3	2	9	−2	1	5	20
Highest Q5	2	5	−6	16	−2	4	7	27
All	2	5	−1	11	−1	2	5	23
(b) Equivalised net income								
Lowest Q1	1	6	1	6	1	−2	2	17
Q2	1	6	1	6	1	−1	3	20
Q3	1	5	2	7	0	0	3	20
Q4	0	6	1	8	0	1	4	21
Highest Q5	2	6	−6	17	−1	1	9	30
All	1	6	−1	10	0	0	5	23

Source: Family Expenditure Survey. Comparison of one year with another may be affected by sampling error.
Note: Equivalised figures allow for the different circumstances of pensioners, e.g. householders/non householders, single/married.

EC (Meetings)

Mr. Wray To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the European Community meetings on matters concerning his Department held in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pursuant to my reply of 8 May, the Labour and Social Affairs Council met on two occasions in each of the years 1985, 1986 and 1988. There were also a number of informal meetings of Employment Ministers and of Ministers responsible for women's issues, at which some social security items were discussed. In addition, there were numerous meetings of officials but information on the number of those meetings could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for 1978, 1979 and 1988 for each social security office and each social security region, the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependents on (i) supplementary benefit or income support and (ii) family income support or family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply of 26 April]:* The available information has been placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Community Care

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there exists in Scotland bridging finance and transfer funds similar to that available to local and health authorities in England and Wales to tide them over the period when community facilities for the handicapped are being developed but institutions cannot be closed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Within their allocations, health boards may make lump sum or continuing payments to a

local authority or voluntary agency towards the cost of projects which make it possible for people such as those with a mental handicap to return to the community.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding is available from Government sources for the rehabilitation of mentally and physically handicapped people in Scotland who have been moved out of institutions into the community under the "care in the community" policy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The cost of providing community care facilities for mentally and physically handicapped people discharged from hospital is met primarily by health boards and local authority social work departments from their general allocations from central Government. These allocations have been substantially increased in real terms since 1979. In addition, a number of voluntary organisations providing community care facilities receive grant either directly from central Government or from regional councils or health boards.

Under the urban programme, the Government provide 75 per cent. grant for a number of projects which benefit mentally or physically handicapped people in eligible deprived urban areas who may be returning to the community. Scottish Homes will devote a set amount of its capital allocation from central Government specifically to housing for the disabled including mentally and physically handicapped people. A range of specific weekly social security benefits is available to the long-term sick and disabled. Such people are also eligible as a priority group to apply for community care grants under the social fund and also to the independent living fund. These grants are intended primarily to help those leaving institutional care to set up home and remain in the community.

Reprocessing Plant, Dounreay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce his decision on the report submitted to him on the European demonstration reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the report of the public local inquiry into the proposed development and he is not yet in a position to predict a date for the announcement of his decision.

Home Ownership

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to introduce measures to increase opportunities for home ownership in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I intend to ask Scottish Homes to introduce by October 1989 a rents to mortgages scheme for the tenants of their existing houses. It will also be open to any new town tenants who may elect to transfer to Scottish Homes under tenants' choice arrangements. This scheme will run for a trial period of three years.

The new scheme will complement the existing statutory right to buy scheme. It will not compete with it, and is aimed at that specific group of tenants who would like to own their own home but who cannot afford to do so even with the discounts available under right to buy. It is not our intention, however, to draw into owner-occupation those who cannot afford it and the scheme will not be available for those tenants dependent on housing benefit.

Tenants who participate will buy their homes by means of a normal repayable mortgage calculated by reference to their present rental outgoings increased to reflect the added benefits stemming from owner occupation, but also adjusted to reflect their added financial responsibility for the future upkeep of their homes. As with right to buy, tenants will benefit from an immediate discount on the purchase price of their property. This will be calculated on the same basis as right to buy discounts, but at a level 15 percentage points less. The remaining finance required will be covered by a deferred loan from Scottish Homes on which there will be no repayments until it is redeemed, for example, on subsequent sale of the House by the owner.

The outstanding loan to Scottish Homes, will be abated each year by an additional discount, up to the maximum right-to-buy discount level minus 15 percentage points. However the final repayment due to Scottish Homes will be based on the level of the outstanding loan amount and on the market value of the house at the date of that repayment: incentives will be introduced to ensure that the house is properly maintained.

I shall be consulting Scottish Homes immediately about the detailed arrangements.

Overprescribing

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many investigations of general practitioners for overprescribing have taken place in Scotland by the health board in the last *(a)* five years *(b)* 10 years and *(c)* 15 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* This information is not available. General practitioners' prescribing is constantly being monitored by health boards and area medical committees.

Federation of the Highlands and Islands Fishermen

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he or one of his Ministers last met representatives of the Federation of the Highlands and Islands Fishermen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Ministers have not met representatives of the Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is, however, in regular contact with the federation and its constituent associations on matters of mutual concern; and they are consulted on all aspects of fisheries management as appropriate.

HEALTH

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year since 1979, and for each district health authority, the numbers of National Health Service patients treated in private hospitals under contractual arrangements; and if he will list the costs of treatment to each district health authority in *(a)* actual amounts and *(b)* deflated by the health service pay and prices index.

Mr. Mellor: The number of patients receiving consultant treatment under contractual arrangements, and health authority expenditure on contracts with private sector health providers, for the years 1982 to 1986 (latest available) are given in two tables which have been placed in the Library. Comparable data for 1979 to 1981 are not available.

The data provided in these two tables are not directly comparable, for the reasons given in the notes on the tables.

Halton DHA

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statment on trends in deaths and discharges per bed in urology in the Halton district health authority area.

Mr. Freeman: There is insufficient information to determine the trend. In 1986, when urology treatment first became available in Halton, 35 in-patient cases were treated. In 1987-88 there were 553 episodes of in-patient urology treatment and 432 day cases.

Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the Thwaites report on the operation of the radiotherapy department of the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital is implemented by the health authority without further delay.

Mr. Mellor: The health authority is fully committed to implementing the recommendations of the Thwaites report following the radiation incident at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital. Some measures necessarily take longer to achieve than others, but all will be implemented.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year since 1979 *(a)* each hospital closed completely and *(b)* each hospital closed partially, and if he will break that list down by each district health authority, SHA and regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: I have placed in the Library tables of hospitals that we are aware have been approved for partial or total closure following consultation under the provisions of the Community Health Council Regulations.

Capital Projects

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give detail of each capital project costing more than £1 million *(a)* actually under construction and *(b)* at the proposal or planning stage; if he will give the estimated date of completion for each project; and if he will break this list down by each regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: Information held centrally on health building schemes, each costing over £1 million, in England shows that there are at present 503 schemes at various stages of planning, design and construction. I have arranged for a list of the schemes with, where available, their expected dates of completion, to be placed in the Library. It is too early to forecast a date of completion for schemes at the programme stage prior to submission for approval in principle.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for each regional health authority, details of proposed capital developments costing more than £1 million which have been cancelled for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that comprehensive information is not available centrally on the adjustments made by health authorities to their capital programmes over this period.

Consultants

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional permanent consultant posts he estimates will be established within the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that 4,843 new consultant posts will be established in England and Wales between 1987 and 1998. This figure, which represents an increase of 33 per cent. in the number of consultants, includes the 100 new posts announced in "Working for Patients".

Community Care

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with interested groups concerning the Griffiths report on community care.

Mr. Mellor: We have discussed community care at the regular meetings we hold, with the local authority associations and with chairmen of regional health authorities, to consider items of current interest in health and social services. We remain of the view that further discussions with interested parties will be most useful when our present deliberations have been completed and our proposals for the future organisation of community care are made public.

Domestic Animals (Diseases)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his calculations or estimates of the incidence of diseases contracted as a result of contact with domestic animals in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: Data on which to base the estimates requested are not available centrally.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his calculations or estimates of the number of cases of diseases caused as a result of contact with dog faeces in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The only disease contractable from dog faeces on which we have data is toxocariasis. We have no direct information on the source of infection in individual cases. The rise in cases in recent years is at least in part due to the development of new tests and to increased screening and testing of patients with symptoms suggestive of the disease.

Toxocara (unspecified)
Laboratory Reports to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre England, Wales and Ireland 1978-1987

Year	Total
1978	10
1979	2
1980	2

Year	Total
1981	2
1982	12
1983	23
1984	37
1985	45
1986	60
1987	84

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his calculations or estimates of the number of cases of toxoplasmosis in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The data requested are as follows:—

Laboratory Reports to CDSC England, Wales and Ireland

Year	Number
1978	621
1979	576
1980	790
1981	865
1982	680
1983	875
1984	828
1985	883
1986	798
1987	868
[1]1988	796

[1] Provisional.
Source: Annual tables.

Medical Records

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on progress being made to agree a code of practice to enable patients to have access to their own medical records.

Mr. Freeman: The medical profession has provisionally accepted a draft code of practice, a copy of which is in the Library. The Department is now preparing to consult over a three-month period other interested parties such as dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors, patient interest groups and NHS management. As soon after that consultation as is practicable, the Department will issue the code under cover of a circular.

Kidneys (Sale)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library the report of the Department of Health inquiry into the kidney for sale at Wellington Humana hospital.

Mr. Freeman: It would not be appropriate to do so. Reports were prepared by the relevant health authorities and passed to me in strict confidence.

Midwives

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he will be taking in response to the Social Services Select Committee's recommendations on midwives' regrading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 10 May 1989.

Test Census

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the results of the recent test census will be published.

Mr. Freeman: The main aims of the test were to make sure that procedures for delivering and collecting forms would be effective in the 1991 census and to assess the readiness of the public to accept and respond to the proposed question on ethnic group.

A report of the public's response to the proposed question on ethnic group will be published when the results of the test and a small follow-up survey in June 1989, have been assessed. This is expected to be towards the end of the year when the draft Census Order is laid before Parliament. The main findings on the census procedures will be published when the test has been evaluated. This evaluation will include an analysis of the proportion of households in each test area who returned a completed form.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rabbit Meat

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has of any DDT residue found in rabbit meat imported into the United Kingdom from the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Ryder: Monitoring by the working party on pesticide residues (WPPR) has revealed residues of DDT and other organochlorine pesticides in rabbit meat imported from the People's Republic of China. These findings were first published in the WPPR's second report in 1986. The results of subsequent monitoring were published in the WPPR's third report on 13 March this year. Although the levels found pose no health concern, imports are being closely monitored and statutory maximum residue levels introduced last year are being enforced.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information on television advertisements in the form requested is commercially confidential.

Food Prices

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the price in pence per pound of sugar, butter, and beef and the price per ton of wheat in the United Kingdom; what are the comparable figures for these items in the world market for food; and if he has comparable information for five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Ryder: Information on first hand/wholesale prices in the United Kingdom is shown in the table. There is no single, representative measure of "world" prices for these commodities. Price quotations available vary according to differences in quality, presentation and point of shipment/destination.

First hand/wholesale prices in the United Kingdom, in nominal and real[1] terms

	1979 (annual average)	1984 (annual average)	1989 (late April/early May)
Sugar[2] (refined, bulk granulated) price per pound			
Nominal	13·0	18·9	22·3
Real terms	26·0	24·0	22·3
Butter (English, London) price per pound			
Nominal	75·9	101·1	119·3
Real terms	150·0	127·0	119·3
Beef (Scottish sides, London) price per pound			
Nominal	61·7	80·8	105·0
Real terms	122·0	102·0	105·0
Wheat (ex farm, bread making) £/tonne			
Nominal	[3]107·0	[3]145·0	126·0
Real terms	220·0	183·0	126·0

[1] Adjusted to 1989 prices using the Retail Price Index (all items).
[2] List price: in practice many sales will be subject to discounts.
[3] May.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is made generally available on the price of foodstuffs *(a)* within the EEC and *(b)* on the free world market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: For the European Community, Eurostat disseminates a range of information, including prices received by producers for certain agricultural commodities, volume and value of imports and exports and consumer price indices for food. Some price data are also available in the specialised trade press and the publications of trade organisations. Price quotations for some products available for "world" trade are published in the specialist press and elsewhere: but these relate generally to particular qualities and presentation at specified locations and are not necessarily comparable with home-produced supplies available on the domestic market: they exclude products traded under special agreements. A significant reduction in agricultural support levels worldwide—a major aim of the Uruguay GATT round—would cause many "world" prices to rise.

Channel Cod Quota

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the review of the Channel cod quota is to be undertaken and completed; what action he intends taking to ensure the continued viability of the south-west fishery during the interim period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We will raise the Channel cod total allowable catch (TAC) at the next meeting of the advisory committee for fisheries management (ACFM) this month. The present TAC is the same as the revised one for 1988 and it is 70 per cent. greater than 1983. Overall, and taking account of the valuable swap of Dutch quotas we secured last December, 1989 fishing opportunities in south west are greater in cod equivalent terms than in 1988. As well as pressing for an early review of Channel cod, we will continue to explore the possibility for further swaps which will improve our fishing opportunities.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the cost of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy slaughter programme is met by the European Community; what the total cost has been to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The total cost of the BSE slaughter and disposal programme, excluding Ministry staff and other resources, up to 31 March 1989 was just over £1·6 million. None of these costs are being met from European Community funds.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the draft EC directive on food irradiation.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the explanatory memorandum 10377/88 on this draft directive which has been lodged in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of vegetables imported from Holland in 1988 were subjected to irradiation.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about possibilities of monitoring foodstuffs for irradiation.

Mr. Ryder: Dosimetric techniques for monitoring the irradiation of food are well established.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of *(a)* registrations and *(b)* applications for the set-aside scheme were validated by field inspections in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is being collected. I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Aerial Photography

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proportion of the United Kingdom arable area was subject in 1988 to aerial photography of sufficient quality to allow identification of the cropping pattern; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has plans for aerial photography of arable land in the United Kingdom in 1989; and what he estimates the cost will be.

Mr. Ryder: Excluding satellite imagery, approximately 1 million hectares of land, mainly in Great Britain, was covered by ADAS aerial photography in 1988. Some 20 per cent. of this area was arable land. This photography was of sufficient quality to allow identification of cropping patterns. Present plans provide for a similar area to be photographed in 1989, both for statutory and advisory purposes. Total budgeted running costs for the ADAS aerial photography unit in 1989-90 are estimated at £250,000.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research projects undertaken for his Department by the Natural Environment Research Council during the past five years.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The following research projects have been undertaken for my Department by the Natural Environment Research Council during the five years ending 1988-89. Some of the projects were completed in that period and others are continuing.

Aquatic environment and fisheries
Factors affecting the population dynamics of sea trout
The physiology of stress response in freshwater fish
Effects of flow regimes in salmonid recruitment
Nutritional requirements and feed behaviour of fish
The role of nultritional deficiency in disease in farm fish
Continuous plankton recorder
Undulating oceanographic recorder deployment off the northeast coast
Plankton production at seasonal thermocline
Irish Sea productivity study
Integration of chemical, physical and biological modelling along the Western European shelf edge
Organic waste disposal in the marine environment
Coastal water processes in the Irish Sea and west Scotland
Organic degradation in the marine environment
Mercury transformations in the marine environment
Relationship between lipids in phytoplankton zoo plankton and herring larvae
Hydrography of the North West approaches
Bait attraction and longlining
The ecology of young stages of salmonid fish and the implications for practical river management
Phytoplankton in relation to mariculture
Environmental stress and physiology of growth in trout
Environmental radioactivity: Impact of freshwater ecosystems: Evaluation of Opercular Bone Material
Fish biology (study of deep sea species)
Salmonid/coarse fish interaction in chalk streams
Biology of *saprolegnia*

Sea Mammal Research
Whale research (research on population dynamics to support United Kingdom representatives to IWC)
Seal research (research on population numbers and dynamics, diet and the impact on commercial fisheries)

River and Flood Protection
Physical aspects of flooding
Catchment response to rainfall
Flood statistics
Wetland hydrology
Environment impact of flood protection measures
Distributed catchment models
Real time forecasting of river flows
National archive for flood hydrology
Catchment response modelling for design flood estimation
Catchment urbanisation
Effects of agricultural drainage on catchment hydrology
Catchment response and the flood frequency curve
Statistical flood estimation procedures
Hydrological behaviour of flat agricultural catchments
Environmental impact of flood protection measures on the water regime of wildlife habitats
River erosion
Risk based criteria for economic analysis of flood protection works

Marine Flood Protection
Numerical models of the seas around Britain
Prediction of sea levels
Wave action and extreme waves
Maintenance and monitoring of the East Coast model
Development of West Coast model
Development of a combined wave/tide/surge model
Statistical prediction of extreme levels
Improvement of sea level prediction for flood protection
Joint probability of waves and sea levels
Wave set-up
High wave studies
Wave-current interaction
Wave measurement in support of such coast flood protection studies
Routine wave measurements
Review of potential of satellite remote sensing for marine flood protection
Archiving of Class A tide gauge data
Wave measurement for South Coast studies
Detailed processes of sand transport by tidal waves etc.
Movement of material on the sea bed under the combined action of waves and tides

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mental Handicap

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds were allocated from his Department for directly commissioned research relevant to mental handicap for each of the past five years; and whether he intends those funds to be increased over the next five to 10 years.

Mr. Needham: No research relevant to mentally handicapped people has been directly commissioned by the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services over the past five years.

The Department is soon to commission a major research project to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policy in Northern Ireland to promote and develop community care for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people selected for discharge from long-stay hospitals. The project will monitor the progress and quality of life of individual patients and will run for at least three years.

Food Safety

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the number of food poisoning cases in each area board in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

	Eastern	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*
1984	43	50	37	15
1985	62	31	60	5
1986	97	107	48	21
1987	193	145	69	16
1988	95	104	57	46

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which Departments in Northern Ireland are responsible for consumer food safety.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Agriculture.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to up-date the law on food safety in Northern Ireland; when his Department last reviewed existing legal provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Food Acts of the United Kingdom (which include law on food safety) were reviewed in 1984

by officials of the United Kingdom Health and Agriculture Departments. Following that review Ministers agreed that consultations should be carried out on the future of those Acts, and those consultations are now largely complete. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced in the House on 16 March, new legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits. In accordance with normal practice in the field of transferred legislation, comparable provision will be made for Northern Ireland by Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what responsibilities health and social services boards have in the area of food safety.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Health and Social Services boards are responsible for investigating food poisoning cases reported by doctors under the Public Health Act (NI) 1967 as amended. In addition, under the Food and Drugs Act (NI) 1958, a chief administrative medical officer of a health and social services board may, if he suspects that any food is likely to cause food poisoning, seize that food and have it tested. If investigations confirm that the food is unfit for human consumption it may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to reform the law in Northern Ireland as it applies to food and hygiene; which Northern Ireland departments are responsible for food safety; and how many staff from each Department have been involved in this area in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 May 1989.]* The Food Acts of the United Kingdom were reviewed in 1984 by officials of United Kingdom Health and Agriculture Departments. Following that review Ministers agreed that consultations should be carried out on the future of those Acts, and those consultations are now largely complete. As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced in the House on 16 March, new legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits. In accordance with normal practice in the field of transferred legislation, comparable provision will be made for Northern Ireland by Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

The Departments of Health and Social Services and Agriculture have responsibilities for food safety.

Figures on the numbers of staff from each Department involved in food safety over the past three years are not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dwellings (Valuation)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 12 April, *Official Report*, column 595, if he will indicate the cost of extracting from the computer on which it is held the information sought by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East about the net valuation of dwellings in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The cost of providing the information requested is more than twice the present limit for answers to parliamentary questions.

Prisons (Education)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show what sums were expended on education in each prison in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and indicate the major items of expenditure in each case; and if he will also indicate the number of library books available in each prison in each such year or as much of such information as is available to him.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The figures requested are readily available for the past four years and are shown in table form.

Cost of education in Northern Ireland prisons 1985-1989

£ 000

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Belfast	96·2	118·3	118·7	130·3
Maze (Cellular)	172·8	205·0	276·8	356·6
Maze (Compound)	108·2	94·9	46·7	
Maghaberry (Male)	0·1	0·1	5·5	40·1
Maghaberry (Female)	—	32·9	37·2	47·0
Armagh	37·0	1·6	—	—
Magilligan	59·6	87·3	93·5	98·7
Young Offenders Centre, Hydebank	111·4	106·7	115·3	129·0
Total	585·3	646·8	693·7	801·6
Library books available to inmates (approx)	40,000	41,000	41,000	35,000

Notes:

1. The increased costs for the year 1988-89 can be attributed to the national increase in teachers' salary scales. This normally accounts for 90 per cent. of the total expenditure on prison education.
2. The range of subjects taught runs from adult basic education through to open university level, and prisoners are prepared for the various public examinations—eg GCSE; A levels; Royal Society of Arts; City and Guilds of London Institute. Statistics available for the 1987-88 academic year show that upwards of 1,000 inmates or just under 50 per cent. of the total prison population were involved in some form of education. Of this, 28 per cent. were enrolled in basic education, 55 per cent. were enrolled in examination classes and the remaining

17 per cent. were enrolled in social/leisure classes. In total 519 were presented for recognised examinations and 477 were successful.
3. Seventy nine inmates are presently involved in the open university undergraduate programme. Last year 69 took examinations and 65 were successful including 10 obtaining distinctions. Within this group five completed their degrees, two with honours.
4. On a sample day 78 per cent. of the population had a total of 4,800 books on loan. The inter-library province-wide loan scheme, of which prison libraries are a part, makes a valuable contribution to the quality of the library service and last year 1,077 special requests were processed. The prison libraries carry a total book stock of around 35,000, all supplied by the local education and library boards, whose professional expertise and practical support is gratefully acknowledged.
5. The reduction in the total number of books available between 1987-88 and 1988-89 results in the amalgamation of the compound prisoners and their libraries into the cellular regime.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when was the most recent case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed in Northern Ireland; and what assessment he has made of whether it indicates any spread of the disease.

Mr. Viggers: The 13th case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Northern Ireland was confirmed on 3 April 1989.

BSE is not thought to spread from animal to animal. The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland has implemented the recommendations of the Southwood committee. These recommendations are intended to prevent further infection of bovines but it must be borne in mind that they cannot prevent cases arising in animals incubating the disease from earlier exposure to the infective agent. As the disease takes a number of years to manifest itself clinically it will be some time before the ultimate success of the measures taken can be assessed.

Family Credit

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families were entitled to family credit and how many were receiving it in 1988-89.

Mr. Needham: The number of families entitled to and receiving family credit on 31 March 1989 was 14,500. A reliable estimate of the number who might be eligible for family credit in Northern Ireland is not available.

Capital Projects (Health Boards)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health board, details of proposed capital developments costing more than £1 million which have been cancelled for each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: No such schemes have been cancelled since 1979.

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proposed timetable for the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Viggers: No timetable has been set for privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity. Government are currently examining the available options and will bring forward their detailed proposals in due course.

General Practitioners

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what account his Department takes of the parity clause in relation to the statement of fees and allowances in the Social Services Agreement Act 1949 and the Finance Act 1971; and what arrangements are accordingly made to budget for general practitioner trainers' remuneration and general practitioner trainees' allowances.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* The amounts payable to general practitioner trainers and trainees under the statement of fees and allowances are the same in Northern Ireland as in the rest of the United Kingdom. Financial provision for general practitioner trainers' remuneration and general practitioner trainees' allowance is made under the family practitioner services section of the Department's Health and Personal Social Services vote 1.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what consideration has been given to amending current arrangements in Northern Ireland to allow designated general practitioner trainers to recruit suitably qualified general practitioner trainees on the same terms as in Great Britain; and what would be the revenue and manpower consequences of such a change;

(2) whether there is any constraint which prohibits the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland from allowing general practitioner trainers to recruit trainees on the same basis as in Britain.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* It is not proposed to introduce arrangements in Northern Ireland to allow designated general practitioner trainers to recruit their own trainees on the same basis as in Great Britain. The present arrangements are designed to limit the annual number of trainees to our manpower requirements and to select trainees in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976 and the guide to effective practice issued by the Department of Economic Development. Copies of each of these documents have been placed in the Library.

However, I can inform the hon. Member that the Department has established a working group of all interested parties to review the arrangements for vocational training for general practice in Northern Ireland.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has yet received approval from the EEC of the proposed management buy-out in co-operation with Mr. Olsen of Messrs. Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* Formal EC approval has not yet been sought for the sale of Harland and Wolff plc to the management buy-out team, backed by Mr. Olsen. Officials of the Department of Economic Development have had discussions with EC officials and a formal notification seeking EC approval will be made in due course.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to offer performance

guarantees on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in respect of any of the three tankers to be built at Messrs. Harland and Wolff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 4 May 1989]:* As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, announced on 22 March, to enable the new Harland and Wolff to raise performance guarantees necessary for the financing of its operations in the early years, the Olsen companies have agreed to make a recourse commitment for use by the new company to support pre-delivery financing. The Government will match this.

Fair Employment Commission

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all those who were considered for appointment as chairmen of the Fair Employment Commission; if he will make a statement about the methods used to appoint to this post; and what advertisements were placed in the press.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* It is not usual to advertise for applicants for appointments to the boards of statutory bodies nor to publicise the names of those who have been under consideration for any public office. The chairman designate of the Fair Employment Commission was selected on the basis of individual merit.

Food Poisoning

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of cases of food poisoning notified to each health and social services board in Northern Ireland in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* The information is as follows:

	Eastern	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*
1986	97	107	48	21
1987	193	145	69	16
1988	95	104	57	46

Environmental Health Officers

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many environmental health officers are currently employed by each district council in Northern Ireland; and what was the figure for 1984.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* In Northern Ireland environmental health officers, outside Belfast, are employed within regional groups of councils. Some officers are retained at group headquarters and provide specialist services to each constituent council. Each council also has its own complement of environmental health officers. The numbers employed are as follows:

	1984	*1989*
Belfast	56	59
Eastern group:		
HQ	8	9
Ards	5	5
Castlereagh	4	4
Down	5	5
Lisburn	7	7
North Down	6	6
Northern group:		
HQ	11	12
Antrim	3	4
Ballymena	5	6
Ballymoney	2	3
Carrickfergus	2	3
Coleraine	5	7
Cookstown	2	3
Larne	3	3
Magherafelt	2	3
Moyle	1	1
Newtownabbey	5	5
Southern group:		
HQ	10	9
Armagh	4	4
Banbridge	2	3
Craigavon	6	7
Dungannon	5	6
Newry and Mourne	5	6
Western group:		
HQ	9	9
Derry	7	8
Fermanagh	4	5
Limavady	2	3
Omagh	3	4
Strabane	2	3
Total	191	212

Maternity Payments

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of children born in Northern Ireland during 1988 were eligible for maternity payments through the social fund; and what was the average payment made.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 May 1989]:* Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, during 1988, 8,129 maternity payments were made. The normal flat-rate payment is £85 per child.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the former employees of North East Shipbuilders Ltd. who have found full-time employment since the closure of the shipyard.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it would be appropriate to list individuals in this way, even if it were immediately practicable. However, I understand that no part-time jobs are included in the figure given recently by Sunderland Enterprise and Training Ltd. for the number of former NESL employees who have found alternative jobs.

Internal Market

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimates have been made of the effects of the completion of the internal market in 1992 on *(a)* job losses in manufacturing industry and *(b)* of the adverse effects in peripheral regions of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The single market will provide great opportunities and challenges to firms in all parts of the United Kingdom. The impact on individual sectors and regions will depend on how successfully individual firms respond.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the post of chief executive to the British Overseas Trade board was advertised; and what are the current pay and conditions of the appointment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The post of chief executive to the British Overseas Trade board was not advertised because it forms part of the duties of a grade 2 civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry. The current pay and conditions of appointment are those applying generally to civil servants of that grade.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any members of the British Overseas Trade board listed on page 3 of the 1987-88 annual report have benefited from the British Overseas Trade board services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Comprehensive information about the use of official export services by individual companies is not readily available. However, companies with representatives who are also members of the British Overseas Trade board, are entitled to use the available services on the same conditions as other United Kingdom businesses.

Mr. Peter Luff

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current salary and duties of Mr. Peter Luff.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the reply which I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 27 January 1989 at column *766*.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the import penetration of every item of manufactured goods under the standard industrial classification for 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available data for import penetration is for 1987 and may be found in *Business Monitor* MQ 12. The 1988 information is expected to appear shortly, following a restructuring of the calculation systems to make them compatible with the intergrated classification for overseas trade (the combined nomenclature) introduced at the beginning of 1988.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the balance of trade in manufactured goods under the standard industrial classification for 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on the basis of the standard industrial classification for 1988 is not currently available. Restructuring of the system which provides these estimates to accommodate the new classification for overseas trade has not yet been completed.

In 1988 the balance of trade in manufactured goods on the basis of the standard international trade classification was in deficit by £14·4 billion.

Defence Exports (Visible Exports)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his reply of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *346*, how the calculations for the percentage of total visible exports supported by defence exports were made.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since the answer to the hon. Gentleman's previous question on 9 December 1988 at column *346* was given my attention has been drawn to the fact that the percentages were based on figures which did not fully represent United Kingdom defence equipment exports.

The correct figures—based on headings in the Overseas Trade Statistics which cover defence equipment expressed as a percentage of total United Kingdom exports are 1·1 per cent. in 1986, 1·5 per cent. in 1987 and 1·0 per cent. in 1988.

Japanese Trade

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the principal manufactured products from Japan imported into the United Kingdom with the corresponding import duties applicable to those products in Japan;

(2) if he will set out the balance of trade with Japan in the last full year and the anticipated figures for the current year;

(3) if he will set out the principal products exported to Japan from the United Kingdom with their rates of import duties and the rates of duty for those same products applicable on imports to the United Kingdom from Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: The crude balance of trade with Japan for 1988—the last full year for which figures are available—was in deficit by £4,766 million. Projections of trade balances for individual countries are not available.

Principal products in our trade with Japan have been identified as those nine-digit United Kingdom commodity code numbers which had the greatest value of trade recorded against them in 1988. United Kingdom duty rates are specified for each of these nine-digit headings; Japanese duty rates are allocated according to the headings of the harmonised system which comprise the first six digits of the United Kingdom commodity code.

The tables show the top ten products listed in order of the value of trade in 1988 for United Kingdom imports of manufactures from Japan and United Kingdom exports to Japan respectively together with the requested duty rates. The products listed account for 27 per cent. of our imports of manufactures from Japan and 22 per cent. of our total exports to Japan.

More comprehensive tables showing the top 100 commodity codes in numerical order (in each case accounting for about two thirds of the overall trade) have been placed in the Library. The tables include the relevant Japanese duty rates. The descriptions of the code numbers and United Kingdom duty rates can be found in the "Integrated Tariff of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library. However, for some of the commodity codes, the descriptions are too specific to identify product groups that can be easily recognised.

If my hon. Friend requires more information about the figures, perhaps he would write to me.

United Kingdom exports to Japan—Top 10 products in 1988

CCN description and code	Import duty rates Japan	United Kingdom
970110001 Paintings in oil or water colours	Free	Free
220830913 Blended whisky other than bourbon warehoused 3 years or more, certified, in containers holding 2 litres or less	15·7 per cent.	0·4 ecu/per cent. vol./hl +3 ecu/hl
711019100 Bars, rods, wire and sections; plates; sheets and strips of a thickness excluding any backing exceeding 0·15 mm of platinium	Free	0·9 per cent.
870324103 New assembled motor vehicles of a cylinder capacity exceeding 3,000 cc other than station wagons/estate cars	Free	10 per cent.
854380909 Electrical machines and apparatus having individual functions nes.	Free	Free
300490199 Medicaments nes put up in forms or in packings of a kind sold by retail	5·3 per cent.	9·6 per cent.
992099008 Postal packages not classified according to kind	n.a.	n.a.
294190000 Antibiotics nes	3·4 per cent.	5·3 per cent.
970600000 Antiques of an age exceeding 100 years	Free	Free
220830991 Wholly malt whicky other than bourbon warehoused 3 years or more, certified in containers holding more than 2 litres	15·7 per cent.	0·4 ecu/per cent. vol./hl

Source:
(i) Integrated tariff of the United Kingdom.
(ii) Customs tariff schedule of Japan, National tariff published annually by Japan tariff association.

United Kingdom imports of Manufactures from Japan—Top 10 products in 1988

CCN description and code	Japanese import duty rates
870323103 New assembled motor vehicles of a cylinder capacity exceeding 1,500 cc but not exceeding 3,000 cc other than station wagons/estate cars	Free
847330000 Parts and accessories of automatic data processing machines	Free
870322103 New assembled motor vehicles of a cylinder capacity exceeding 1,000 cc but not exceeding 1,500 cc other than station wagons/estate cars	Free
870321101 New assembled motor vehicles of a cylinder capacity not exceeding 1,000 cc	Free
852290999 Parts and accessories of sound recorders or reproducers or television image and sound recorders or reproducers nes	3·4 per cent.
851782001 Facsimile transmission machines	Free
847192901 Printers for automatic data processing machines (ADP)	Free
847193500 Disc storage units for ADP machines	Free
900990100 Parts and accessories of electrostatic photocopying apparatus or other photocopying apparatus incorporating an optical system.	Free
870323101 New assembled station wagons/estate cars of a cylinder capacity exceeding 1,500 cc but not exceeding 3,000 cc	Free

Source:
(i) Intergrated tariff of the United Kingdom.
(ii) Customs tariff schedule of Japan, National tariff published annually by the Japan tariff association.

Single Market

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is being done to liberalise United Kingdom export controls in preparation for the single European market.

Mr. Alan Clark: Her Majesty's Government expect to see a considerable reduction in controls on exports to our European Community partners and others before 1992. A step in this direction has been taken with the introduction of an open general export Licence which frees British exporters from the need to apply for individual licences for a wide range of industrial goods for export to our partners in the European Community, the USA, Canada, Japan and Australia.

I am placing a copy of the open general export licence (European Community and COCOM destinations) in the Library.

Estate Agents Act

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the operation of the Estate Agents Act.

Mr. Forth: I am concluding a review of estate agency. The review has considered the operation of the Estate Agents Act 1979 and in this context I have received advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Soviet Union (Joint Enterprises)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many joint ventures have been entered into by British companies with *(a)* Soviet state enterprises and *(b)* Soviet co-operatives to date; and if he will list them.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 10 May 1989. Of those, 33 signed UK/USSR joint ventures of which we are aware, 29 are with Soviet state organisations while the remaining four are with Soviet co-operatives. My Department is unable to list them, however, as much of the information has been provided to us on the basis of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many joint ventures have been entered into with the Soviet Union by EC companies to date; and if he is able to list the number for each member state.

Mr. Alan Clark: The most comprehensive and most recent survey of joint ventures entered into in the Soviet Union by EC companies held by my Department is a *PlanEcon Report*[1] dated 24 March which gives details of

103 joint ventures which had been registered with the Soviet Ministry of Finance on or before 15 February 1989. For ease of comparison, the number with each member state is as follows:

EC Member State	*Number*
West Germany	36
Italy	20
United Kingdom	12
France	10
Luxembourg	3
Spain	3
Belgium	2
Denmark	2
Netherlands	2
Greece	1
Ireland	1
Portugal	0
	92
Joint Ventures having partners from more than one EC Member State	4
Joint Venture having partners from an EC Member State and a third country	7
	103

[1] *The PlanEcon report* is a weekly United States publication, which analyses major macroeconomic and trade developments in the economies of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

The number of joint ventures has since risen, though no more recent comparison is available. As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 10 May 1989, my Department is, for example, aware of 33 joint ventures signed to date between United Kingdom companies and the Soviet Union, not all of which have been registered with the Soviet authorities.

Telephone Calls

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide equivalent figures on telephone calls to those given by the then hon. Member for Wembley, South on 23 January 1968, *Official Report*, column 331, for the latest available date.

Mr. Atkins: The latest year for which such information is publicly available is 1983. In that year some 21·5 billion effective telephone calls were made, of which 82·6 per cent. were local calls; 16·7 per cent. inland trunk calls; 0·43 per cent. were continental calls and 0·26 per cent. were other overseas calls.

EMPLOYMENT

Job-seeking Records

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the status of the detailed job-seeking records asking claimants to fill in what they have done from Monday to Friday which some unemployed people are asked to complete by claimant advisers; and what is the position of those claimants who refuse or who are otherwise unable to complete them.

Mr. Lee: Benefit claimants are not required to complete a formal record showing their detailed daily activities in order to maintain their claim.

Training

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training continues to grow faster than any other previous adult training programme. By 28 April, there were over 184,000 people in training. They clearly recognise the benefits the programme has to offer and the opportunity it provides to help them get a job.

Maternity Leave

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reviews he is making of maternity leave for employees; and if he will take steps to harmonise United Kingdom practice with that of other European countries.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to amend the maternity rights contained in the employment protection legislation.

British Coal

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice he has given British Coal in regard to the implementation of the new mine safety regulation and codes of practice; and if he proposes to offer any guidance to ensure that British Coal properly implements the proposed arrangements and that there is no attempt to unilaterally amend them in practice.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has not given any advice to British Coal on this matter. Regulations and codes of practice approved under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act have the force of law.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information on the number of female part-timers in April 1988 with an average working week of *(a)* one hour, *(b)* two hours, *(c)* three hours, *(d)* four hours, *(e)* five hours, *(f)* six hours, *(g)* seven hours and *(h)* the total below eight hours; and how many have been working (i) over eight hours but below 16 hours, and (ii) 16 hours and above.

Mr. Lee: Preliminary estimates from the spring 1988 labour force survey are as follows:

Women aged 16 and over in part-time[1] employment in Great Britain

Basic usual weekly hours worked[2]	*Number working (thousands)*
1	19
2	57
3	65
4	113
5	97
6	176
7	87
Less than 8 hours	[3]627
8 hours but less than 16 hours	1,545
16 hours to 30 hours	2,821

[1] Basic usual weekly hours of 30 or less per week.
[2] Excludes mealbreaks and overtime.
[3] Includes a few people whose basic usual weekly hours were a half hour or less. Half hours are rounded to the nearest even hour.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information showing the number of male part-time workers in Great Britain in April 1988 and the proportion of those workers whose earnings fell below *(a)* £3·80 per hour, *(b)* £2·85 per hour, *(c)* £2·80 per hour and *(d)* £5·70 per hour.

Mr. Nicholls: There were an estimated 914,000 part-time male employees in employment in March 1988. The estimated percentage of part-time male employees earning below the specified amounts in the new earnings survey sample in April 1988 was:

Hourly earnings less than	*Percentage*
£	
2·80	55
3·00	63
3·80	79
5·50	87
6·00	88

Figures of the proportion earning below £2·85 and £5·70 per hour are not available; the nearest available figures have been given.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have become self-employed in the last year in the east midlands; what trend can be discerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures on people starting or finishing self employment. Between December 1987 and December 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the estimated number of self-employed in the east midlands region increased by 10,000 to stand at 205,000. This is an increase of 82,000 or 67 per cent. since 1979, and follows the national trend of substantial growth in self employment during the 1980s.

Home Workers

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many home workers are covered by each wages council, and the total number of home workers covered; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the statistics on compliance with wages council rates in 1988 for home workers in a similar format as the answer of 1 March, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), *Official Report*, columns *201-06*.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information on home workers in wages council trades is as follows. No count is made of the numbers covered by the councils but estimates suggest that the total lies between 20,000 and 30,000.

Results of wages inspectorate checks of home workers pay by trade—1988

Wages council	*Home workers whose pay was checked*	*Home workers found underpaid*	*Percentage of home workers checked found underpaid*
Clothing manufacture	331	6	1·8
Button manufacturing	13	0	0
Hat, cap and millinery	105	0	0
Linen and cotton handkerchief	9	0	0
Made-up textiles	20	0	0
Ostrich and fancy feather	2	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	4	0	0
Retail non-food	7	0	0
Rope twine and net	22	0	0
Toy manufacturing	66	0	0
Total	579	6	1·04

Results of wages inspectorate checks of home workers pay by division—1988

Division	*Home workers whose pay was checked*	*Home workers found underpaid*	*Percentage of home workers checked found underpaid*
London	79	5	6·3
South East	49	0	0
Eastern	283	0	0
South West	59	0	0
Midlands	67	0	0
North West	14	1	7·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	28	0	0
Northern	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0
Total	579	6	1·04

ENVIRONMENT

Public Utilities

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now plans to bring in new legislation on public utilities and street work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

Proposals for the reform of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 have been drawn up with the benefit of advice from the street works advisory committee, following extensive consultation. A paper has been sent to interested parties inviting comments on the details of our proposals. A copy of that paper is in the Library. Legislation will be brought forward as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

Rates (Don Valley)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for *(a)* Brodsworth parish council and *(b)* Clayton with Frickley parish council in the parliamentary constituency of Don Valley (i) his estimates of the income raised for a 1p rate on the non-domestic properties in 1989-90 and (ii) his estimates of the total amount of business rate income available in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much nuclear waste is being produced annually in the United Kingdom;

(2) what is the total amount of nuclear waste so far accumulated in the United Kingdom at *(a)* high level, *(b)* intermediate level and *(c)* low level; and what quantity in each category is currently awaiting disposal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figures are contained in the 1987 United Kingdom Radio-active Waste Inventory, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Rates (Wirral)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends taking any action against the Wirral non-metropolitan borough for its 23 per cent. rate rise in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Because of the introduction of the community charge in April 1990, we do not intend to take action against any authority which budgets excessively in 1989-90. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has power to take early action to reduce the budget of any authority which he considers excessive next year.

Second Homes (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many second homes there are in each metropolitan district authority in the county of South Yorkshire; in each case what percentage of the total housing stock this represents; and if he will show in his answer, the figures for five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Trippier: The most recent information is available from the census 1981 county report for South Yorkshire. Table 18 shows for each district numbers of unoccupied second residence household spaces, together with all household spaces. A copy of the publication is available in the Library.

Water

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report*, the volumes of water at present being abstracted in the Greater London area and the Inner London area and the number of licensed boreholes in each area.

Mr. Howard: This information is not held centrally. Thames water authority is responsible for licensing water abstractions.

Local Plan (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to hold an inquiry into the south-east Bradford local plan following the decision by the council to change to industrial use 21 acres at Low Moor.

Mr. Chope: The primary responsibility for the south-east Bradford local plan and its content lies with Bradford city council. The local plan has already been the subject of a public local inquiry. There is no cause for the involvement of the Secretary of State.

West End Development (Bradford)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have been held between representatives of his Department and Bradford council regarding the west end development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Officers of Bradford city council have been present at preliminary discussions which my officials have had with the prospective developer. Any application for city grant, which has been discussed, would be made direct to the Department by the developer. Planning permission must be obtained before any such application is accepted.

Drinking Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the information in his Department concerning time-limited derogations and delays which have been granted on the non-compliance of potable waters in England with the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption, 80/77/EEC.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) on 7 February 1989 at columns *591-97*.

Sewage Discharges

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a list, for each water authority, of those sewage works in respect of which applications have been made for revised sewage discharge consents.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed a list for English water authorities in the Library of the House.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will study the system implemented in the Federal Republic of Germany for the environmentally safe recovery of the chlorofluorocarbons in refrigerators in order to assess its applicability for the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials of the Department of the Environment are shortly to visit the Federal Republic in order to make a technical evaluation of the experimental plant in question and to determine the possible use of the system in the United Kingdom.

Community Charge

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will show in the *Official Report* the numbers, grades and cost of his Department's staff dealing with public and media inquiries about the community charge and with publicity campaigns on the community charge; and whether these costs were included in the costs of his campaign announced on 8 May.

Mr. Ridley: No members of my Department deal exclusively with public and media inquiries, or with

information campaigns, about the community charge. As is usual, the figures included in my letter to the hon. Member dated 8 May were for production and distribution costs and did not cover the time of departmental staff.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost of the community charge publicity unit being run from PO Box 622, Bristol BS99 1TR; and what are the numbers and grades of staff employed there.

Mr. Ridley: The PO Box No. to which the hon. Member refers is that of a private company contracted by the Central Office of Information, on behalf of the Department, solely to fulfil requests for departmental publications on the community charge. The estimated cost of this service is some £300,000, but the final cost will depend on the number of requests received.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* his letter of 8 May to the hon. Member for Copeland setting out his plans to publicise the community charge.

Mr. Ridley: I am arranging for copies of my letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Use Classes Order

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the inclusion in structure plans and local plans of policies designated to curtail the freedoms provided by the use classes order.

Mr. Howard: Structure plans and local plans may reasonably seek to encourage particular types of development, but they should not include development control policies whose effect would be to impose general restrictions on the freedoms provided by the use classes order and by the general development order where those orders provide for changes of use without the need for specific planning permission. As was recognised in Circular 13/87, it may very exceptionally be appropriate for a local planning authority in determining a particular planning application to impose a condition restricting the use to which land or buildings may subsequently be put; but plans should not embody general policies for such restrictions.

Development plan policies must be relevant and up to date if they are to carry weight in the consideration of planning applications and appeals. Local planning authorities should, therefore, where necessary bring forward early alterations to policies in plans which are in conflict with the basis of the use classes order. Where already submitted alterations or replacement plans have been drawn up on the basis of the former provisions, the Secretary of State will want to consider the need for modifications to bring them into conformity with the order. Planning authorities should where necessary be prepared to put forward revised proposals for consideration at the examination in public.

Water (Connection Charges)

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to include powers in the Water Bill to allow charges to be made recovering the cost of providing extra capacity to meet demands from newly connected properties.

Mr. Howard: I have considered evidence provided to me about the operation of the existing arrangements. I have concluded that a right to charge at the time new connections are made to water mains and public sewers will provide a clearer, fairer and more certain basis for ensuring infrastructure is provided. The necessary amendments to the Water Bill are therefore being tabled. Conditions of appointment of the water and sewerage companies will place a ceiling on the level of charge that can be made, related to the investment costs of the companies.

Drinking Water

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost of installing treatment plant to reduce pollution of the water supply to the European Economic Community standard; and whether the water companies after privatisation will be allowed to add a margin of profit on the capital employed in the installation in addition to the cost of borrowing the sum required for that purpose.

Mr. Howard: Water undertakers have submitted programmes of work, together with projections of the cost (including the cost of installing new treatment plants) of complying with the EC drinking water directive. My right hon. Friend is reviewing the programmes, which require discussion with individual water undertakers. Until he has examined them all it is not possible to indicate their costs. However, the programme together with their costs, will be included in prospectuses to be published later in the year.

Clause 7 of the Water Bill requires the Secretary of State, or the Director General of Water Services, to ensure that water and sewerage undertakers are able (in particular by securing reasonable returns on their capital) to finance the proper carrying out of their functions.

DEFENCE

Odstock Hospital, Salisbury

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has funded any staff or research at any time since 1979 at Odstock hospital in Salisbury.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD funds a considerable amount of extramural research, but it is not our practice to go into details of individual contracts. It is for the institutes themselves to confirm their involvement.

Holding Berths

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of a holding berth; whether holding berths have permanent safety precautions against radiological hazards; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a full list of all the locations of holding berths in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamliton: A holding berth is a berth available for use over the shortest practical period by a nuclear-powered warship in circumstances when an unplanned event either temporarily precludes the use of a Z or X berth to which it is on passage, or temporarily prevents the warship continuing with its intended movement when leaving a port or berth. A holding berth is for contingency use only and may not be used by

planned intent. Holding berths are all covered by public or special safety schemes, but, because they are by nature off shore, much of the detail that applies to Z and X berths is not appropriate. When a nuclear-powered warship is temporarily occupying a holding berth, a tug must be in attendance, other shipping must be required to pass or anchor away from the warship, and an emergency radiation monitoring team must be maintained on call in operational readiness. There are holding berths off shore from Barry, Cardiff, Devonport, Liverpool and Rosyth.

"British Defence Policy"

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost *(a)* to design, research and compile and *(b)* to print the pamphlet, "British Defence Policy"; how many copies have been printed; what is the cost of distribution; and if he will list the organisations provided with copies and the number provided to each.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The cost of designing, researching and compiling "British Defence Policy 1989-90" was £29,187 (including VAT); printing is estimated to cost £78,434 (including VAT); and the estimated cost of distribution is £5,100. A total of 130,000 copies are being printed, of which 5,000 have been distributed to date, free of charge, to MPs, peers, journalists, foreign defence attachés and advisers, officials and members of the armed forces and NATO headquarters. We have also sent them to non-government organisations which have requested them, such as Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Associations, Peace through NATO, the British Atlantic Committee, Families for Defence, the Royal United Services Institution, and the Royal Institute for International Affairs. Additional copies will be sent on request.

"Sanity"

Mr. Paul Flynn To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his departmental library has on order the monthly magazine *Sanity* produced for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for Vickers Submarine Engineering Ltd. of the Canadian Government decision to withdraw from purchasing Trafalgar class nuclear power submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Canadian Government had not awarded any contracts prior to their decision not to proceed with a nuclear-powered submarine programme. Had the programme gone ahead and the United Kingdom been selected as country of origin for the design of the submarine, United Kingdom industry, including Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd., would have expected to obtain a significant proportion of the business.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* all surveys of whatever size carried out by his Department amongst past and present submarine service personnel or their offspring to determine whether there has been any abnormal statistical evidence of medical disorders arising from exposure of Royal Navy nuclear submarine personnel to radiation; if he will publish the dates and the population census for such surveys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Medical records of all naval personnel are analysed annually and any health trends are identified. There have been no special surveys carried out by the Department to determine whether there is any evidence of medical disorders arising from exposure of Royal Navy nuclear submarine personnel to radiation. A report on morbidity in submariners between 1969 and 1974 was produced in 1975: this was not specifically concerned with the effects of radiation. Also, as I said in reply to the hon. Member on 2 May at columns *61-62*, a study into mortality and morbidity among submariners is currently in progress. This, too, is not specifically concerned with radiation, although it examines radiation along with all other factors which could affect the health of submariners.

In general, personnel serving in Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines receive lower radiation doses than members of the public, since they are shielded from much cosmic and terrestrial radiation. Those submarine personnel designated as radiation workers are included in the national register of such workers, unless they explicitly ask to be excluded.

Housing Stock

Mr. Robert Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the size and composition of the housing stock owned and rented by his Department in the Plymouth area and the number currently *(a)* unoccupied and *(b)* for sale; and if he will provide the corresponding figures for Torpoint, including the addresses of those that are to be sold.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence currently owns 2,914 houses and 637 flats in the Plymouth area. We have no rented properties there. As at 31 March 1989, the most recent date for which comprehensive figures are available, 1,190 properties were vacant and 501 of these were in the process of disposal. At Torpoint we own 102 houses and 64 flats; 52 were vacant on 31 March 1989 and nine of those were in the process of disposal. Many of the vacant properties are undergoing modernisation or major maintenance, some are already allocated to service families who will be moving in shortly and others are being prepared for disposal. I shall write to my hon. Friend about the properties to be sold at Torpoint.

Submarines (Medical Records)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now agree to release medical records to past submariners when these are asked for.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the policy of the Department to release medical records. Two exceptions to this are the release of copies of relevant clinical notes to a qualified medical practioner for the purposes of continued treatment, and the release of copies of relevant notes to a medically qualified adviser for use in legal proceedings. They are not released to the person to whom they refer. This accords with the policy of the NHS for the handling of civilian records. Radiation dose records are, however, kept for those submariners designated as radiation

workers, and are maintained separately from the medical records. These dose records are released to the individual concerned on request, and are forwarded to him as a matter of course when he leaves the service, in accordance with the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985.

DIDO Reactor, Harwell

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what safety experiments have been conducted, using the DIDO reactor at Harwell by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* UKAEA Harwell undertakes work for the Royal Navy on a commercial basis. Tests of materials performance relevant to the design and safety of the naval reactor systems have been conducted in the DIDO reactor.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers (Accommodation)

14. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prison officers now reside in prison accommodation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: About 20 per cent.

Juvenile Offenders

15. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent developments in dealing with juvenile offenders.

Mr. John Patten: Recorded juvenile crime is falling. More juveniles are being cautioned rather than prosecuted and more being dealt with under an increasing range of demanding and constructive community-based measures. Custody remains available to deal with the most serious juvenile offenders. The Government are considering how to improve the arrangements for the remand of alleged juvenile offenders.

Football Grounds (Safety)

16. **Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairmen of London football clubs to discuss football ground safety in London.

23. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the chairmen of London football clubs he has met officially in the last six months.

Mr. Hurd: I have had no such meetings. My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport meets the chairmen of league football clubs, including London clubs, from time to time, as well as representatives from the Football League and the Football Association.

Police Initial Recruitment Test

17. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations regarding the current police initial recruitment test.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations from the Commission for Racial Equality about the validity and possible culture bias of the test, which the Commission suggests should be more closely related to the needs of the job. Although there is no evidence that the test works to the detriment of applicants from the ethnic minorities, the Police advisory board is considering the case for a new test.

Violence

18. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to tackle increasing violence in non-metropolitan areas.

Mr. John Patten: We have strengthened the police; tightened the law on under-age drinking and increased the penalties available to the courts; reminded the police and courts of their powers to deal with outbreaks of disorder; encouraged the swift hearing of cases of this kind; and made it an offence to carry a knife in a public place without good reasons. My right hon. Friend has also approved pilot projects in seven areas to test the effectiveness of byelaws making it an offence to drink alcohol in designated public places. The ministerial group on alcohol misuse will take action to follow up certain recommendations contained in a recently published Home Office research study on drinking and disorder.

38. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to reduce drink-related violence in South Yorkshire.

Mr. John Patten: We have strengthened the law on sales of alcohol to under-age drinkers and increased the penalties available to the courts. We have reminded the police and courts of their powers for dealing with outbreaks of disorder and infringements of the licensing laws, and asked them to arrange for swift prosecutions and court hearings after outbreaks of hooliganism and violence. In February the Government issued a circular giving advice about local action to tackle all forms of alcohol misuse. Initiatives at national level are being taken forward by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse. Meetings with representatives of the drinks and fast food industries are planned to discuss recommendations contained in a newly published Home Office research study on drinking and disorder.

Young People (Arrests)

21. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have been made of young people in the London area for each of the last six months for which figures are available, under section 3 of the Vagrancy Act 1824; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available.

Metropolitan Police (Freemasonry)

22. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has raised with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the influence of freemasonry in the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend discussed the matter at length with the Commissioner. There is no evidence that freemasonry has influenced Metropolitan police officers either in the execution of their duties or in the internal management of the force.

Police Recruitment

25. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to help encourage recruitment into the police force in the light of the growing shortage of young people coming on to the employment market.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A working party has been set up by the Police advisory board to examine the recruitment problems arising from the reduction in numbers of school leavers and to make recommendations for future recruiting strategy. I hope that the working party's recommendations will be ready for consideration at the board's next meeting in the autumn.

Charity Commission

26. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the responsibilities of the Charity Commission.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend hopes shortly to publish a White Paper setting out the Government's proposals to implement the Woodfield report which recommended a number of changes in the responsibilities.

Shops (Theft)

27. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking to reduce theft from shops.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department is taking against theft from shops.

Mr. John Patten: The prevention of theft from shops is primarily a matter for the retailers themselves. We support the retailers in a range of ways; through the advice on preventive measures contained in the 1986 report of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention working group on shop theft, our crime prevention handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime" and crime prevention unit research papers, and in meetings with retailers and their representative organisations. It is encouraging that the number of offences of theft from shops fell by 12 per cent. in 1988 and that the number of offences has fallen by almost a quarter since 1985.

Police Efficiency

28. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in implementing the recommendations of the Audit Commission on police efficiency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following its special study on the police, the Audit Commission has produced detailed audit guidance for district auditors, for use in the value for money audits which they are conducting in all provincial police forces. The police forces are co-operating fully with the district audit service in these inquiries. Chief officers of police and the police authorities are primarily responsible for implementing promptly the improvements in efficiency and effectiveness which are identified. This is valuable work which has the full support of the Home Office and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary.

Hillsborough Disaster

31. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the estimated costs of the Hillsborough police inquiry and the means of funding the West Midlands police responsible for that inquiry.

Mr Douglas Hogg: It is not clear at this stage what the total additional costs of the Hillsborough police inquiry will be. With regard to the means of funding the West Midlands police I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) on 28 April at column *702*.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the West Midlands police authority will be fully reimbursed for the costs of the West Midlands police inquiry in support of the judicial review into the Hillsborough stadium tragedy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham Selly Oak, (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) on 28 April at column *702*.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost to public funds of the police inquiry into the Hillsborough football disaster; and if the costs will be met by his Department.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not clear at this stage what the total additional costs of the police inquiry into the Hillsborough football disaster will be. With regard to the means of reimbursing the West Midlands police I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) on 28 April at column *702*.

Parking (London)

32. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further measures he plans to provide for the enforcement of parking and waiting restrictions on through routes into London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The enforcement of parking and waiting restrictions has been reviewed by a working party under Home Office chairmanship. The working party has recently submitted its report, which we will consider carefully.

Prison Service

33. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to increase the efficiency of the prison service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fresh start continues to improve the efficiency of the prison service. The service is on course to achieve the initial implementation efficiencies by the end of 1989-90. Under the framework agreement, half of the hours lost in the progressive reduction in prison officers' working week to 39 hours on 1 April 1992 are being made up by efficiency improvements. A management services group supports prison service managers in achieving best value for money and a programme of efficiency reviews is undertaken. Additional initiatives, including examination of the scope for civilianisation, are also being pursued.

My right hon. Friend announced on 3 February at column 420, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), a review of the organisation of the service above the level of individual establishments which is charged with identifying by the end of July the scope for further improvements in effectiveness and value for money.

Police Forces

34. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to increase co-operation between police forces without altering the current structure.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to improve the organisation and structure of the police forces in the north-west region of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has recently made clear that we shall maintain the present structure of the police service, with responsibility shared under the 1964 Police Act between the chief constable, the police authority and the Home Secretary, while seeking to intensify co-operation within it.

There is provision in the 1964 Act for collaboration and aid between forces. Regional crime squads deal with serious criminal offences, including drugs, crossing force or regional boundaries. My right hon. Friend also has powers to provide common services. Examples include the national drugs intelligence unit, the Police staff college and district training centres, the crime prevention centre, and the police national computer.

Gulf (Secretary of State's Visit)

35. **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to the Gulf.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia between 27 March and 3 April and had a number of useful meetings with senior members of the Governments of those countries. I discussed the scope for intensifying the level of co-operation with this country in a number of fields, including terrorism, drugs, organised crime and police training. In Saudi Arabia, I signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government to facilitate closer co-operation on these issues.

Identity Cards

37. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning identity cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In addition to the advice of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the recommendations of the Home Affairs Committee, my right hon. Friend has received this year some 130 letters on the subject of a national identity card from hon. Members and from the general public.

Cocaine (Prisons)

39. **Mr. MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to strengthen international co-operation against the trafficking and use of cocaine in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department plays a full part in international co-operation against cocaine trafficking in general and there is not considered to be a need for separate international steps relating specifically to its misuse or trafficking within prisons.

Ports (Policing)

41. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the cost of policing ports in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None so far this year to my right hon. Friend, but there are continuing discussions on the policing of ports between the Home Office and the forces and police authorities concerned.

Prison Service

42. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the planned total for Government spending on the prison service in 1989-90; and what was the figure in 1978-79.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The planned total for Government expenditure on the prison service (England and Wales) in 1989-90 is £1,140,100,000. Expenditure in 1978-79 was £285,300,000.

Neighbourhood Watch

43. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of neighbourhood watch schemes now operating in the Bury area; and what was the figure five years ago.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of March 1989 there were 336 neighbourhood watch schemes in the Bury metropolitan district division of the Greater Manchester police force area. Five years ago there were none.

Television Licence Fee

46. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking the abolition of the television licence fee for pensioners.

Mr. Renton: Since 1 January 1989, four hon. Members and one member of the public have written seeking free TV licences for pensioners.

Drug Addicts

47. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the proportions of total notified drug addicts aged under 21 in 1988; and what was the figure in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on drug addicts to the Home Office in 1987 and 1988 is given in "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom,

1988" (Home Office *Statistical Bulletin* issue 13/89), a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Table 8b shows that the proportion of addicts aged under 21 was 14 per cent. in 1987 and 12 per cent. in 1988.

Parking

48. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reached any conclusions in respect of the report on parking enforcement powers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No conclusions have yet been reached.

Police Co-operation (Europe)

52. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure greater co-operation between the United Kingdom police and the police forces of European Economic Community partners.

50. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve co-operation against crime amongst the member countries of the European Community.

57. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Deparment what steps he is taking to improve co-operation against crime amongst the member countries of the European Community.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friends to the reply that I gave to questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 2 February 1989 at column *384*.

Young People (Alternatives to Custody)

53. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he is currently supporting to develop alternatives to custody for young people.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office action plan on tackling offending encourages probation services to develop local action plans for dealing with more young adult offenders in the community. Intensive probation programmes mainly for young adult offenders at risk of custody are under discussion in 10 probation areas. Grants totalling about £1·5 million over three years have been made available to encourage voluntary sector participation in work with 17 to 20-year-old offenders in the community.

Passports

54. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of working days currently taken by the London passport office to process an application for the issue or renewal of a passport; and what the figure was a year ago.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and for Fylde (Mr. Jack).

Female Prisoners (Children)

55. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women currently detained in Her Majesty's prisons have had children removed into care as a result of their imprisonment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

West Midlands Police

56. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will bring forward proposals to further increase the establishment of the West Midlands police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The West Midlands police authority has applied for an increase of 350 police posts in the force establishment in 1990-91. This will be considered, together with applications from other authorities, with advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. The aim is to announce increases towards the end of 1989.

My right hon. Friend has recently approved, as a permanent establishment increase, 14 police posts previously held supernumerary to establishment for duties at Birmingham airport. The costs are met by the airport authorities.

Illegal Drugs

58. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to strengthen international co-operation against trade in illegal drugs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office continues to play an active role in the work of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Community as it concerns drugs. In London next week my right hon. Friend and I will be chairing a meeting of Ministers of the Council of Europe's drug co-operation group (the Pompidou group) to consider some of the most urgent drugs problems facing European countries. We shall concentrate particularly on countering the threat posed by cocaine and "crack", confiscation of proceeds derived from illicit trafficking and the problem of AIDS and drug misuse. We hope that the meeting will give renewed political impetus to the valuable work being undertaken by the group and its 19 member states.

Domestic Violence

59. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to take any action aimed at reducing domestic violence following the publication of his research study.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave earlier to a question from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman).

Prisoners (Police Cells)

61. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held in police cells at the most recent available date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 10 May 135 prisoners were held in police cells in England and Wales.

Private Security Industry

62. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning regulation of the private security industry.

Mr. John Patten: In addition to correspondence on the subject from hon. Members, we have received representations from and on behalf of the International Professional Security Association, the Institute of Professional Investigators, the Electrical Contractors Association, "Ex Police in Industry and Commerce", the Retail Consortium, the British Retailers Association, the Multiple Shoe Retailers Association and the Drapers Chamber of Trade. We shall also be considering the views of the working group which has been set up to look at the self-regulation of the industry.

65. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the public and private housing estates which are being patrolled by private security companies.

Mr. John Patten: No central record is kept of housing estates which are patrolled by private security companies.

Immigration Detention Centre

67. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider the decision to relocate the immigration detention centre to Gosport.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The proposal is still under consideration. A decision will be announced shortly.

Parental Responsibility

68. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to ensure that local authorities who stand in loco parentis are obliged to pay court fines imposed upon children in their care.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans to introduce such a requirement at present.

Right to Silence

69. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the right to silence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question of 13 April at column *709*.

Police Establishments (Warwickshire)

70. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to visit Warwickshire to discuss police establishments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Hon. Friends whose constituencies lie within the Warwickshire constabulary force area discussed the establishment of the force with my right hon. Friend on 6 March.

Prison Baby Units

71. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children, and of what age, are currently in each of the baby units in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 28 April 1989, 24 babies were in the prison mother and baby units at Askham Grange, Holloway and Styal. The ages of the babies were:

	Number of babies
Aged under one month	3
Aged 1-2 months	4
Aged 2-3 months	2
Aged 3-4 months	4
Aged 4-5 months	1
Aged 6-7 months	3
Aged 7-8 months	2
Aged 9-10 months	4
Aged 17-18 months	1

Anti-litter Campaigns (Young Offenders)

72. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for directing young offenders into anti-litter campaigns.

Mr. John Patten Community service schemes for convicted offenders must provide some work placements whose purpose is to improve the appearance and amenities of a neighbourhood. Home Office Circular 18/1989 about national standards for community service orders gives as examples for this work: cleaning off graffiti in public places; clearing litter from paths, pedestrian precincts and bus shelters; clearing waste ground; erecting litter bins. Community service orders are available for offenders aged 16 and over.

AIDS

75. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to prevent the spread of HIV infection in prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 13 April 1989 at column *710*.

Business Initiative

76. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many ethnic minority business initiative projects currently receive Home Office funding; where they are located; what is the extent of that funding; and whether it represents an increase over 1988 funding levels.

Mr John Patten The Home Office ethnic minority business initiative funds 10 projects. They are located in Birmingham, Bristol, Brent, Brixton, Deptford, Ealing, Finsbury Park, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Wandsworth. Funding for the 1988-89 financial year totalled £196,252, which represented a 48 per cent. increase on funding for the 1987-8 financial year.

Private Police Forces

77 **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the use of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 in connection with the setting up of private police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations from four right hon. and hon. Members (one on behalf of one of his constituents), one noble lord and the chairman of the Police Federation for England and Wales.

Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to representations on the Broadcasting White Paper dated 20 April from the Nottinghamshire chamber of commerce.

Mr. Renton: This letter was acknowledged on 4 May and will be taken into account along with over 3,000 other responses to the broadcasting White Paper. We want to look carefully in the round at all the representations we have received.

Scene of Crime Officers

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to implement the recommendation for the appointment within each police force of 75 scene of crime officers per 100,000 notifiable offences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for chief officers to decide, in the light of the particular circumstances of their forces, how many scene of crime officers to employ. In making this decision, they will no doubt take fully into account the recommendations of the Audit Commission that each force should employ 75 scene of crime officers per 100,000 notifiable offences.

Fingerprinting

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to improve the quality control exercised by police forces in collecting fingerprints.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to his question on 13 April 1989 at column *708*.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recommendations have been made concerning the police fingerprint service by the advisory group established by the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers in February 1988; and when he expects to receive the comments of the Association of Chief Police Officers on these recommendations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The group has so far made recommendations on the introduction of best practice for the collection and maintenance of fingerprint records, guidelines for searching regional and national fingerprint collections and revised training for fingerprint officers to improve the quality of fingerprint marks obtained.

We expect to receive the comments of the Association of Chief Police Officers on these recommendations in the autumn.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in evaluating an automatic fingerprint recognition system for use by the police fingerprint service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have recently completed an evaluation of the effectiveness of commercially available automatic fingerprint recognition systems and are considering the case for providing such a system on a national basis.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to ensure that, within police forces, force general orders reflect the powers granted by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to obtain fingerprints.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No specific steps are considered necessary. The police are bound by the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the codes of practice made under the Act, and it is up to individual chief officers to ensure that their force orders accurately reflect these provisions.

Morphine Derivatives

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to relax controls on the import of morphine derivatives to provide greater competition in the United Kingdom market.

Mr. Hurd: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission, in its report on the supply of opium derivatives in the United Kingdom, recommended that, in order to increase competition in the United Kingdom market, I should work towards a relaxation of the restrictions which I now maintain on the importation of these products. The restrictions, which are supported by the International Narcotics Control Board, are designed to help limit the volume of international trade in these products, thereby minimising the risks of diversion to the illicit market. Similar restrictions are maintained by a number of other countries, including several of our European Community partners. In the light of the MMC report, I am discussing with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how increased competition may be provided in this field consistent with the need for strict control of supply.

Stop and Search

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with the review of the stop-and-search provisions of the PACE codes of practice; when he expects to be able to make known to Parliament any proposals for change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We undertook to keep the operation of the codes under review when they were debated in 1985. Last year we initiated a consultative exercise on all the codes and we are currently considering the many responses received. The responses on the stop and search provisions raise some difficult issues which will need careful thought. We hope to be able to circulate revised draft codes for public consultation later this year and then to lay these before both Houses, in accordance with the provisions of section 67 of PACE.

Prisons (Car Travel)

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current car mileage allowance paid to *(a)* prison departmental staff, *(b)* police officers, *(c)* prison local review committee members, *(d)* prison visitors and *(e)* members of boards of visitors whilst travelling on official business in their own cars.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The relevant current car mileage allowances are as follows:

Prison Departmental Staff, LRC Independent Members and Prison Visitors.

1-10000 miles p a	*Thereafter*	*Journeys limited to public transport rate*
34·4p	20·3p	16·4p
34·4p	20·3p	16·4p
34·4p	20·3p	16·4p

Police Officers

Type of Use	*Vehicle Categories* 451-999cc	1000-1199cc	1200-1450cc	1451-1750cc
Essential Users				
Lump sum per annum	£480	£549	£660	£741
First 11000 miles per annum, per mile	18·8p	21·5p	24·6p	27·3p
After 11000 miles per annum, per mile	8·6p	9·8p	10·6p	11·6p

Type of Use	*Vehicle Categories* 451-999cc	1000-1199cc	1200-1450cc	1451-1750cc
Casual Users				
(miles per annum) per mile				
1-1500	35·3p	40·3p	47·2p	52·8p
1501-5500	24·6p	28·1p	32·6p	36·3p
5501-11000	18·8p	21·5p	24·6p	27·3p
Thereafter	8·6p	9·8p	10·6p	11·6p

Members of Boards of Visitors

Vehicle Categories		
up to 999cc	1000-1199cc	over 1199cc
18·6p	20·2p	22·4p

Pensioners (TV Licences)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it would cost, under the new rates, to provide a colour television licence free of charge to all pensioner households.

Mr. Renton: The cost under the new rates of providing a colour television licence free of charge to all pensioner households would be about £400 million a year in terms of licence revenue forgone.

War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to receive the report concerning the alleged war crimes committed by those who have since become British citizens; and if he intends to make a statement in the House when he has considered the report.

Mr. Hurd: I now understand that the inquiry expects to submit its report to me in June. I shall consider the question of a statement to the House when I have had an opportunity to study the report.

Football Stadiums

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those Football League grounds in England and Wales that were given a ground safety certificate only after the erection of perimeter fencing around standing enclosures or terracing.

Mr John Patten: This information is not held centrally. Local authorities are under a duty to issue safety certificates in respect of grounds designated by the Secretary of State under the Safety of Sports Act 1975. The terms and conditions of a safety certificate are what the local authority, after consultation with the police and either the fire authority or building authority, consider necessary or expedient to secure reasonable safety at the particular ground. These may include a requirement as to pitch perimeter fencing.

Electoral Law

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what actions his Department undertakes to ensure that returning officers and their staff are aware of the full provision of electoral law.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office issues periodic guidance on electoral law to returning officers and acting returning officers in England and Wales. A comprehensive memorandum of guidance for acting returning officers is also sent to each ARO when a parliamentary general election or by-election is imminent, and attention is drawn to any recent changes.

Boundary Commission

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the reviews in the current work load of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Parliamentary Boundary Commission is at present reviewing the constituencies of Buckingham and Milton Keynes.

Game

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what animal species in the United Kingdom are classed as game.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Night Poaching Act 1828, hares, pheasants, partridges, grouse (including

capercaillie and ptarmigan in Scotland), heath or moor game (i.e. red grouse), black game (i.e. black grouse) and bustards are counted as game. The Poaching Prevention Act 1862 includes, in addition, rabbits, snipe and woodcock and the eggs of pheasants, partridges, black and moor game. Other legislation affords close season protection to deer, other birds including ducks and geese, and certain fishes.

Prisoners (Suicides)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes any changes to prison service procedures for the prevention of inmate suicides.

Mr. Hurd: We have today issued a new circular instruction (CI 20/1989) to prison governors, which restates and reinforces my Department's suicide prevention strategy. The new instruction re-emphasises the importance we attach to staff support for suicidal inmates, and the main procedural change it makes is to reduce unnecessary documentation when inmates are first received in custody, so that the time saved can be used for fuller assessment of suicide risk at this crucial stage. The establishment of a suicide prevention management group at all establishments will also be mandatory. A copy of the new circular instruction is being placed in the Library.

Crime

19. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime in Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime reduction applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower in Essex is being increased this year, and we are supporting it and the other south-east forces in the "Secured by Design" project, which will be launched next month. The project will encourage the construction industry to incorporate security measures as standard in new homes. Recorded crime in Essex fell by 4 per cent. in 1988.

20. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime in Northamptonshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have a crime reduction strategy which applies to all parts of England and Wales. Recorded crime fell by 5 per cent. in 1988 in Northamptonshire, and the police strength will be further augmented this year, bringing the total authorised establishment to 1,121.

73. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime reduction applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower and resources have been substantially increased, Crime Concern was launched with Government support in May 1988 to stimulate, support and develop local crime prevention activity and the largest ever national crime prevention publicity campaign was launched last year.

Total crime in the Metropolitan police district and City of London fell by 2·5 per cent. in 1988. My right hon. Friend approved a further 300 police posts for the Metropolitan police from 1 April bringing the authorised establishement up to 28,415. The City of London's establishment remains at 798. The Government encourage the growth and development of neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. There are now 9,493 watch schemes covering approximately 952,500 households throughout London, together with 30 panels and six junior panels. Three very active crime prevention associations operate in the City. Both forces are involved in the Home Office-supported "Secured by Design" project which aims to encourage house builders, planners and developers to incorporate security measures as standard in new homes; the scheme will be launched on 7 June. Lewisham and Tower Hamlets are two of the areas in our safer cities programme.

74. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the action he has taken to combat the increase in rural crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Many of our policies on crime prevention are applicable to rural areas. We have increased police manpower to an unprecedented extent in the provinces since 1979. We have reminded the police and courts of the powers available to deal with outbreaks of disorder and issued guidance to the courts about arranging speedy court hearings after sudden outbreaks of disorder. We have encouraged the creation of local farm watch and rural watch schemes to increase community co-operation in preventing crime.

63. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to tackle violent crime in urban areas.

Mr. John Patten: We have strengthened the police and made it an offence to carry a knife in a public place without good reason. We have raised the maximum penalty for some of the most serious offences of violence to life imprisonment, and we have introduced a new right of appeal for the prosecution against an over-lenient sentence. We have established the safer cities programme to help reduce crime and fear of crime in inner-city areas; 12 projects are under way.

64. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the current trend of crime figures in Leicestershire.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) on 13 April at column *713*.

60. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss ways of combating the increased incidence of violent crime within the context of a general decline in crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The problem of violent crime is a matter which is frequently discussed at my right hon. Friend's regular meetings with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. My right hon. Friend looked at the subject in considerable detail when he met the Commissioner at the beginning of this year to discuss the 1989 strategy statement for the Metropolitan police.

49. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps his Department is taking against crime in Cambridgeshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime reduction applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower and resources have been substantially increased, "Crime Concern" was launched with Government support in May 1988 to stimulate, support and develop local crime prevention activity and the largest ever national crime prevention publicity campaign was launched last year.

Total recorded crime in Cambridgeshire fell by 1 per cent. in 1988. My right hon. Friend approved a further 18 police posts for the force from 1 April bringing the authorised establishment up to 1,198. The Home Office encourages the growth and development of neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. There are now 275 watch schemes covering approximately 8,250 households throughout Cambridgeshire together with four panels and three junior panels.

44. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to increase resources available to local authorities for crime prevention activities.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office's safer cities programme is making new resources available to local authorities as well as to other statutory bodies, voluntary groups and business and commerce. Operating through a network of local crime prevention projects, the programme has Home Office funds for staff, running costs and grant aid. This year's total budget is £4·2 million and includes grant support for each area of some £·25 million a year, for which local authorities as well as other bodies may apply. The hon. Member will know that resources for crime prevention are also available through several Department of the Environment programmes.

45. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime; and if he will make a statement.

51. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new steps his Department is taking to combat crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are continuing to strengthen the police, to ensure that the courts have adequate maximum penalties at their disposal, to increase the number of available prison places, and to encourage interest in crime prevention through our handbook "Practical Ways to Crack Crime", through encouragement of neighbourhood watch schemes and through such initiatives as the safer cities programme.

40. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the ministerial group on crime prevention.

66. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of the ministerial group on crime prevention.

Mr. John Patten: The ministerial group meets under my chairmanship about every two months in order to supervise the Government's general crime prevention strategy. The Departments represented on the group are: Education and Science, Employment, Energy, Environment, Health, Social Security, Trade and Industry, Transport, Treasury, together with the Home Office, Northern Ireland Office and the Scottish and Welsh Offices.

This year our main effort will be directed to examining the costs of crime and what we know about the cost effectiveness of crime prevention measures.

36. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the latest crime figures for Basildon and the preceding four years.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 14 April at column *414*.

29. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking against crime in Hampshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Our strategy for crime reduction applies to all parts of England and Wales. Police manpower and resources have been substantially increased, "Crime Concern" was launched with Government support in May 1988 to stimulate, support and develop local crime prevention activity and the largest ever national crime prevention publicity campaign was launched last year.

Total recorded crime fell in Humberside by 6 per cent. in 1988. My right hon. Friend approved a further 20 police posts for the force from 1 April bringing the authorised establishment up to 3,148. The Government encourage the growth and development of neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. There are 580 watch schemes covering approximately 25,000 households throughout Hampshire together with three panels. The Hampshire constabulary is one of 10 south-east forces involved, with the Home Office support, in an ambitious scheme "Secured by Design" which aims to encourage house builders, planners and developers to incorporate security measures as standard in new homes; the scheme will be launched on 7 June. Rushmoor borough council is one of seven local authorities taking part in a trial byelaw scheme designed to prevent the consumption of alcohol in certain designated public places. The scheme will be closely monitored by local authorities and the Home Office.

30. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to meet local authority representatives to discuss crime prevention.

Mr. John Patten: There is regular consultation between Home Office officials and local authority representatives on a wide range of issues including crime prevention. This will continue.

24. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to help prevent crime in Greater Manchester.

Mr. John Patten: Crime reduction forms part of a strategy which applies to all of England and Wales. There was an 8 per cent. reduction in recorded crime in Greater Manchester during 1988, and further police manpower increases have been agreed. Bolton was one of those participating in the Home Office "Five Towns" initiative

designed to show that crime and the fear of crime could be reduced through the co-ordinated action of a variety of local agencies and members of the community. The Bolton project continues with the support of the Metropolitan borough council and a three-year urban programme grant from the Department of the Environment. Rochdale and Salford are to participate in the safer cities programme.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 12 May 1989

WALES

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Department's only spending on television advertising during this period was £20,000 on the Welsh element of the misuse of drugs campaign. Details of spending with individual television companies is commercially confidential.

Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends the Welsh Office agricultural department to make available to farmers throughout Wales application forms for grants under the farm and conservation grant scheme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The appropriate forms are now available.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the figures for investment by the Welsh Development Agency since its inception.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 5 May 1989]:* Capital investment on mainstream Welsh Development Agency programmes is as follows:

	£ million
1976-77	15
1977-78	26
1978-79	24
1979-80	22
1980-81	49
1981-82	48
1982-83	47
1983-84	44
1984-85	50
1985-86	43
1986-87	49
1987-88	71
1988-89	81

The figures do not include the special provision of about £120 million which was made available to the WDA to tackle the needs of Wales arising from the steel closures in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For details of this provision, I refer to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 18 January 1988 at column *612*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union

Mr Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise as a matter of urgency in the current CSCE information forum the recent arrests of dissident publishers in the Soviet Union, and the terms of the new articles of the Soviet penal code published on 11 April.

Mrs. Chalker: The two Russians recently arrested for distributing material in Moscow were subsequently released.

We are deeply disappointed by the 8 April decree containing amendments to Soviet criminal legislation. We are making this clear to the Soviet authorities both in Moscow and at the London information forum. We hope that the new Supreme Soviet, when constituted, will have the opportunity to alter the decree radically, so as to bring it into line with Soviet public statements and their international commitments.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy initiatives he intends to take with regard to the 1990 fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; how many preparatory committee meetings are expected to take place; and where such meetings are to be held.

Mrs. Chalker: There are three preparatory committees prior to the NPT review conference. The first took place in New York from 1 to 5 May. The second will be held from 11 to 18 September 1989, and the third from 23 April to 4 May 1990, both in Geneva. As a depositary power, we attach great importance to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and shall be working actively for a constructive and successful review conference.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what United Kingdom representation was present at the first preparatory committee meeting of the fourth review conference of the 1990 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference; and if he will make a statement on its outcome.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom delegation at the first preparatory committee, held in New York from 1 to 5 May, consisted of four officials and was led by an official from the science, energy and nuclear department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The preparatory committee successfully resolved a number of administrative questions relating to the review conference.

TRANSPORT

Railways (Investment)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the volume of investment in railways in the United Kingdom, France and West Germany in 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what sum this investment represents per capita in each of these countries.

Mr. Portillo: My Department has no readily available information on railway investment in France and West

Germany. The figures for rail investment by British Rail, Northern Ireland Railways and London Regional Transport are as follows:

	1987-88 Cash	*1988-89 Prices*	*1988-89*
BR (£ million)	526	563	596
NIR (£ million)	5	5	4
LRT (£ million)	274	291	271
Total investment (£ million)	805	859	871
Investment per capita (£)	14·14	15·09	15·30

Notes:

1. Per capita figures for both years are based on the mid-1987 figure for United Kingdom population of 56,937,000.
2. 1988-89 figures are forecast outturn.
3. The BR figures include investment in freightliners, BRML and BREL but exclude the laying of continuous welded track, which BR do not classify as investment.

Airport (Essex)

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has been approached by any consortium seeking permission to build an airport on either Foulness Island or Maplin Sands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. My right hon. Friend has seen only press reports suggesting airport development off the Essex coast.

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his long-term policy for airports includes the building of a new international airport in Essex, or offshore from the Essex coast.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The 1985 White Paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) set out the strategy for airport development in the south east to meet demand to the mid-1990s. This strategy did not include a new airport off the Essex coast but foreshadowed a substantial role for Stansted airport. My right hon. Friend is currently awaiting formal advice from the Civil Aviation Authority on the adequacy of airport capacity to 2005.

A1

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce his conclusions on the inspector's report into the alterations to the A1 between Wetherby and Dishforth; and when work will commence on these improvements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Secretaries of State for Transport and the Environment hope to announce their decision in the summer.

It is too early to give a reliable estimate of when works will commence. The date depends upon the time needed to complete the outstanding statutory procedures, which include publication of the compulsory purchase order.

Toll Motorways

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made of toll motorways on the European continent; and what are the conclusions in relation to their feasibility in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: The Department keeps in touch with developments and experience in the operation of toll motorways in Europe. We are keen to encourage the private sector to come forward with proposals for privately funded roads. It will be up to promoters to consider the feasibility of such schemes, including any proposals for motorways. The Government will shortly issue a consultation paper on private finance for roads.

Package Holidays

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is prepared to take to secure passenger comfort and redress against protracted delays and inconvenience for those travelling on package holidays by air.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At a conference held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last November to analyse air traffic congestion, airport authorities were asked to develop contingency plans to cope with delayed passengers. A number of important initiatives were proposed which were reported to a follow-up conference held by the Civil Aviation Authority in March. These included improved communications and passenger information within airports, additional accommodation and facilities, and the provision of entertainment. Plans are also being developed to provide passengers with advance information about delayed flights.

Whether or not holidaymakers who suffer protracted delays are entitled to redress will depend on the terms of their contract with the tour operator and on any scales of compensation the tour operator may publish. It would ultimately be for the civil courts to resolve any disputed claim for compensation in respect of delays in the light of all the circumstances. It is possible for holidaymakers to take out insurance against protracted delays in certain circumstances.

Birmingham Relief Road

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *765*, if he has yet received his inspector's report on the public inquiry held in May 1988 on his Department's proposals for the Birmingham northern relief road; and if he is yet able to make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. It arrived last month and is being considered.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

County Courts (Jurisdiction)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what changes he proposes in the use of rateable values as indications of jurisdiction in county court cases.

The Attorney-General: As part of the Government's programme for implementation of the civil justice review, announced on 6 April, the upper financial limit of the county courts' jurisdiction in actions for the recovery of land will be removed. Arrangements will be made for any transitional period there might be between the abolition of the domestic rating system and that of the county court limit, if this proves necessary.

In some cases, however, it will still be necessary for the substance of a claim to be quantified, and various options are being considered by the Lord Chancellor.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will set up a study of the operation of the civil procedures related to domestic violence.

The Attorney-General: No. The Law Commission is carrying out a review of the courts' civil jurisdiction relating to domestic violence, other molestation and rights of occupation of the home. This review will examine both important areas of procedure and the remedies available. The commission hopes to issue a discussion paper later this year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Institute for Japanese-European Technology Studies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what contribution has been made to the Institute for Japanese-European Technology Studies; and over what period contributions will continue to be made.

Mr. Forth: Neither the Department of Trade and Industry nor the Department of Education and Science has given specific financial support to the Institute for Japanese-European Technology Studies, but my Department welcomes this initiative and is represented on the institute's external advisory committee.

Inward Investment

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current level of inward investment in the United Kingdom; and what was the comparable figure for 1978.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available information on the level of inward investment in the United Kingdom is given in table 9.1 of "The United Kingdom Balance of Payments —1988" (the CSO pink book). A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Advertising

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent by his Department on advertisements on commercial television in each of the last five years, listed by each television company.

Mr. Forth: I am advised by the Central Office of Information, through which the Department buys such advertising, that the detailed information requested is commercially confidental. The Department's total expenditure on television advertising in the last five years was as follows:

	£
1984-85	32,000
1985-86	nil
1986-87	nil
1987-88	4·6 million
1988-89	[1]13·2 million

[1] Provisional.

Iraq

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, in real terms, the size of United Kingdom exports to Iraq for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The value of exports to Iraq for each of the last 10 years is given in the following table. The information is not available in real terms.

United Kingdom exports to Iraq 1979-88

Value in £ millions

Year	*Value*
1979	201·2
1980	322·1
1981	623·9
1982	873·7
1983	399·9
1984	343·1
1985	444·7
1986	443·8
1987	271·7
1988	412·1

Source:
Overseas Trade Statistics.
Note:
1988 figures are provisional.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Ward: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received the annual report and accounts of British Shipbuilders for 1987-88.

Mr. Newton: In accordance with sections 17(9) and 18(6) of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977, I am today laying before each House copies of British Shipbuilders' annual report and accounts for 1987-88.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria govern how the members of the British Overseas Trade Board, listed in the 1987-88 report from pages 32 to 38, treat their commercial interests when taking decisions as members of the British Overseas Trade Board; and whether a register of members interests is compiled and a financial declaration made where relevant.

Mr. Alan Clark: *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The British Overseas Trade Board advises on overseas trade and the official export promotion programme. The board itself does not take decisions on the provision of services or other forms of assistance to individual businesses and conflicts of interest do not therefore arise. Of the bodies listed in pages 32-38 of the annual report, only the Overseas Project Board considers matters involving official assistance to individual businesses, and members are specifically excluded from advising on cases in which they have an interest. A full register of members' directorships and financial interests is maintained by the Department.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the percentage of total pensioners' income in 1988 represented by the state retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The 1986 family expenditure survey shows that 59 per cent. of pensioners' average gross income was derived from all social security benefits.

HEALTH

NHS Reform

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish *(a)* details of the monitoring he intends to instigate on his reform programmes for the National Health Service, *(b)* which organisations will be carrying out which pieces of monitoring and *(c)* the criteria used for measuring success.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Health authorities will be expected to monitor progress on the review locally, and the NHS management executive will monitor progress over the country as a whole. The test of success will be the extent to which reforms help the NHS to provide better quality services for patients.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the extent to which places in refuges for victims of domestic violence are below the level of one family place, namely for a woman and her children, per 10,000 of population.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have any central records of the numbers of family places available in refuges. However, the national voluntary organisation, Women's Aid Federation (England), estimates that there are approximately 1,755 family places in women's refuges in the United Kingdom.

This represents one family place per 25,844 of the population aged 16 and over.

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mental hospitals have been closed in the past year.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply 22 March 1989 c. 671]:* The information requested is now available and is in the table. It comprises the mental illness hospitals/units which we are aware were approved for total closure in 1988.

Hospital	*District*
Clifton	York
High Wick	Southern Derbyshire
Whitecroft	Isle of Wight
Hungerford	West Berkshire
Crossley	Halton

ENVIRONMENT

Water Industry (Employment)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for *(a)* the Yorkshire water authority and *(b)* the Severn Trent water authority, how many people were employed in the water industry in 1979, 1985 and each subsequent year to date.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is published in "Waterfacts 1988," a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Figures for 1989 are not yet available.

Stack Emission Tests

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the results of stack emission tests carried out by HMIP on industrial plants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results of tests carried out by HMIP on emissions to the atmosphere are not generally published because many of them are of an investigative nature rather than routine tests for compliance with emission limit values. Test results are often summarised for individual premises in the district annual reports that are made available locally.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with local authorities ways of increasing the number of refuges for the victims of domestic violence and of providing them with more adequate and secure funding.

Mr. Trippier: It is for individual authorities to assess the local need for refuges and to make, or encourage others to make, appropriate provision. We give support to refuges through the urban programme and housing investment programmes, and the Housing Corporation also funds refuges provided by housing associations.

Peak District National Park

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of whether the Peak District national park can remain in satisfactory condition within the financial provision currently available; and what further moneys will be made available in the current and succeeding financial years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In determining the amount of national parks supplementary grant in respect of each national park authority's expenditure, my right hon. Friend takes account of the authorities' detailed functional strategies and the recommendations of the Country-side Commission. NPSG for the Peak District national park for 1989-90 is £2,461,900, an increase of 10·3 per cent. over 1988-89 and 25 per cent. higher in real terms than the park's settlement in 1979. I cannot anticipate future years' settlements.

Nuclear Plants (Sites)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications of the European Court decision of September 1988 over implementation of the Euratom treaty article 37 in regard to the Electricité de France nuclear plant at Cattenom for future United Kingdom nuclear plant siting.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no implications for the United Kingdom.

Land Register

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Hams of 26 April, *Official Report*, column 937, if he will breakdown the 37,805 acres by ownership and region and if he will give details in each case as to how the land came to be placed on the register.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* I have placed tables in the Library giving a breakdown by owner and region of land added to the register in 1984-88. There are separate tables for land subsequently removed from the register before the end for 1988 and for land still on the register at the end of 1988.

The land was entered on the register because information supplied by the owners indicated that it satisfied the conditions set out in section 95(2) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Expenditure

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the latest figure for expenditure per pupil on *(a)* books and *(b)* equipment and comparable figures for each year since 1978-79 in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in cash and real terms using an index of 100 for 1978-79.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Books and equipment (separate figures for books and equipment not available)

Year	Primary schools			Secondary schools			Special schools		
	Cash £	Real terms £	Index	Cash £	Real terms £	Index	Cash £	Real terms £	Index
1978-79	10·40	21·22	100	22·88	46·69	100	24·32	49·63	100
1979-80	12·05	21·04	99	25·24	44·08	94	26·65	46·55	94
1980-81	12·34	18·18	86	25·73	37·91	81	30·96	45·62	92
1981-82	14·37	19·27	91	29·22	39·20	84	38·34	51·43	104
1982-83	14·63	18·32	86	30·62	38·34	82	38·11	47·72	96
1983-84	15·08	18·07	85	31·74	38·03	81	41·83	50·12	101
1984-85	16·37	18·77	88	34·26	39·29	84	46·38	53·19	107
1985-86	17·14	18·54	87	36·40	39·38	84	46·13	49·91	101
1986-87	18·30	19·21	90	42·14	44·24	95	67·77	71·15	129
1987-88	19·94	19·94	94	47·92	47·92	103	84·78	84·78	171

Queen's University

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the total number of applications for post-graduate certificate of education courses received by Queens' university, Belfast for courses commencing 1986, 1987 and 1988 were for physics, chemistry and mathematics; and what level of qualifications they had already obtained.

Dr. Mawhinney: Numbers of applications were as follows:

	1986-87	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Physics	38	40	34
Chemistry	50	59	62
Mathematics	56	63	59

Information about the level of qualifications of applicants is not available.

Youth Training Programme

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the 1989-90 financial allocations to Northern Ireland's education and library boards for YTP schemes; and how much of this has been allocated by each board for special needs provision.

Dr. Mawhinney: The board's estimates of YTP expenditure for 1989-90 have only recently been received by the Department of Education and are now under consideration. I hope to be able to advise the hon. Gentleman of the allocations approved and the amounts included for special needs provision later this month.

PRIME MINISTER

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will co-ordinate ministerial action to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive full information regarding the legal, counselling and housing help that is available for them.

The Prime Minister: Information about the help available to victims of domestic violence is best provided locally. Some statutory and voluntary organisations already issue leaflets. The ministerial group on women's issues is co-ordinating Government action and will consider outstanding needs when it meets on 15 June to discuss the recently published Home Office research on this subject.

British Intelligence (History)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Prime Minister when publication of the official history of British intelligence in the second world war will be completed.

The Prime Minister: Volumes I, II and III of the official history of British intelligence in the second world war by Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others have been published; part 2 of volume III was published in February 1988. Volume IV (security and counter-intelligence) by Sir Harry Hinsley and Mr. C. A. G. Simkins and Volume V (strategic deception) by Professor Sir Michael Howard are being prepared for publication towards the end of this year or early next year.

Efficiency Unit (Scrutiny)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Prime Minister what topics have been covered in the efficiency unit's scrutiny programme in the last financial year.

The Prime Minister: The 1988-89 programme of scrutinies carried out in association with the efficiency adviser and the efficiency unit are:

Cabinet Office
- Government economic statistics

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
- Administration of the integrated tariff
- Running cost implications of information technology

British Council
- Inward visits

Ministry of Defence
- MOD support for military associated functions at schools and universities
- Defence accommodation stores

Department of Employment
- Inspection rating system (HSE)
- Fraud investigation (with DSS)

Department of the Environment
- Control of administrative expenditure in non-Departmental public bodies

Home Office
- Grants made under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966
- Magistrates' courts

Inland Revenue
- Schedule D procedures
- Internal post

Northern Ireland Office
- Land Registry

Overseas Development Administration
- Administration of aid-tying rules (with DTI)

Scottish Office
- Prison buildings

Department of Social Security
- Fraud investigation (with DE)
- (Under Franchise Programme) Overseas branch (Newcastle central office)

Department of Trade and Industry
- Administration of aid-tying rules (with ODA)
- DTI economic statistics

Further topics for scrutinies are being discussed with Departments.

A number of other scrutinies are also being conducted according to full scrutiny disciplines and with guidance from the efficiency unit:

Metropolitan Police
- Civil staff recruitment and retention
- Police abstractions from duty

Provincial Police Forces
- Scenes of crime function
- Driver training
- Communications
- Sick absence
- Transport management
- Community relations
- Attendance at court
- Stores and printing

DEFENCE

Japanese Companies (Collaboration)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of any projects worked in collaboration with Japanese companies.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence is involved in no such projects.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation and National Insurance

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify the distribution of gains in the Budget from each item where *(a)* tax or *(b)* national insurance changes were made other than normal indexation, according to income bands as follows: less than £5,000 per year, £5,000 to £7,500, £7,500 to £10,000, £10,000 to £12,500, £12,500 to £15,000, £15,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £30,000, £30,000 to £50,000 and above £50,000; and if he will indicate the percentage of total *(a)* tax and *(b)* national insurance changes accruing to each group and the percentage of the total numbers of *(a)* taxpayers and *(b)* national insurance that each group comprises.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* The changes in income tax rates and allowances other than those for indexation are the changes to age allowances and withdrawal rate. They will cost about £15 million in 1989-90. About 15 per cent. of this cost will go to taxpayers with income less than £5,000; about half to those with incomes between £5,000 and £10,000 and the rest to those with incomes between £10,000 and £14,000. The total number of taxpayers who will benefit is about half a million; about 2 per cent. of all taxpayers. Further information is not available.

The required information for national insurance contribution in the year 1990-91 (the first full year of the proposed NICs structure) is estimated to be as follows:

Distribution of NICs gains and gainers in 1990-91

Earnings[1] *£000s*	*Gains £ billion*	*Gains per cent.*	*Numbers*[2] *per cent.*
<5·0	0·15	5	13
5– 7·5	0·30	11	14
7·5–10·0	0·55	20	17
10·0–12·5	0·50	18	16
12·5–15·0	0·40	15	13
15·0–20·0	0·50	18	15
20·0–30·0	0·30	10	9
30·0–40·0	0·05	1·5	1·5
40·0+	0·05	1·5	1·5
Total	2·80	100	100

[1] Earners with weekly earners below the weekly lower earnings limit assumed for 1990–91 are ignored. Insufficient information is available on those earning £50,000 and above and so the table shows figures for £40,000 and above.

[2] Numbers are of national insurance class 1 standard rate contributors earning in excess of the lower earnings limit.

Government Debt

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *470*, if he will list any rules relating to the holding of Government debt by insurance companies and pension funds.

Mr. Lilley: I still do not know which rules the hon. Gentleman has in mind. If he would care to write to me about this matter, I would be happy to respond.

Tax Returns

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the numbers of Inland Revenue tax returns issued and received in each year from 1979 to the latest year available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The approximate numbers of personal tax returns issued at the start of every tax year from 1979-80 onwards are as follows:

	(millions)
1979-80	9·79
1980-81	9·11
1981-82	8·35
1982-83	7·88
1983-84	8·00
1984-85	7·92
1985-86	7·64
1986-87	7·35
1987-88	7·30
1988-89	7·31
1989-90	7·97

No central record is available of the number of returns received.

Tax Fraud

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for 1979 and 1987-88 the number of cases of tax fraud detected for which the amount recovered exceeded *(a)* £100,000, *(b)* £500,000 and *(c)* £1,000,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The numbers of settlements in cases of tax fraud, categorised by the amounts recovered, including appropriate interest and penalties, were:

	1988-89
£	
100,000 - 500,000	517
500,001 - 1,000,000	32
over 1,000,000	18

Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total number of Inland Revenue staff currently employed in investigating tax fraud, and the number employed in 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* Inland Revenue resources, expressed as units of full-time staff, employed in investigating tax fraud are:

	Number
Year to 31 October 1980[1]	1,265
Year to 31 March 1989	2,752

[1] The earliest year for which figures are available.

Tax Investigations

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of Inland Revenue tax investigations settled *(a)* with and *(b)* without prosecution for tax recovered between (i) £0·1 million and £0·5 million, (ii) £0·5 million and £1·0 million and *(c)* over £1·0 million from 1979 to the most recent year available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]: (a).* No records are kept of the total amounts of tax recovered from investigations which result in prosecution. However, the numbers of prosecutions categorised by the amounts of tax in respect of the matters brought before the court, were:

	1979	1988-89
100,000-500,000	3	6
500,001-1,000,000	—	1
over 1,000,000	—	—

Figures for intervening years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

(b). The Inland Revenue keeps records of total settlements only (that is, tax plus interest penalties where appropriate). Details of settlements categorised by amounts of tax alone could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers of staff currently in post in the Inland Revenue division dealing with schedule D evasion.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The number of Inland Revenue staff, expressed as full-time units, employed in dealing with Schedule D evasion for the year ended 31 March 1989 is 2,135.

Tax Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the number of tax units *(a)* not liable to income tax, *(b)* liable to income tax at the basic rate and *(c)* liable to tax at rates higher than the basic rate in (i) 1978-79, (ii) 1988-89 and 1989-90;

(2) if he will give the number of tax units over pensionable age *(a)* not liable to income tax, *(b)* liable to income tax at the basic rate and *(c)* liable to tax at rates higher than the basic rate in 1978-79, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 8 May 1989]:* Estimates are given in the tables.

Estimated Number of Tax Units[1] (millions)

	Not liable to income tax	Liable to income tax at reduced rate only	Liable to income tax at basic rate (excluding higher rate taxpayers)	Liable to income tax at higher rate	All tax units
Aged[2] units					
1978-79	4·4	1·0	1·4	0·1	6·9
1988-89	5·0	—	2·4	0·2	7·6
1989-90	4·9	—	2·4	0·2	7·5
All tax units					
1978-79	7·7	3·1	17·6	0·7	29·1
1988-89	11·0	—	19·9	1·3	32·2
1989-90	11·0	—	19·8	1·5	32·3

[1] Single people and married couples.
[2] Single people aged 65 and over and married couples in which one or both members are aged 65 or over.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount and share of pre-tax income accruing to *(a)* the top one per cent., *(b)* the top five per cent., *(c)* the top ten per cent., *(d)* the top 25 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(f)* the bottom five per cent. and *(g)* all taxpayers in each year 1978-79 to 1988-89 and the amount and share of tax liability for each of these groups.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* Estimates are given in the tables for 1978-79 and 1983-84 to 1988-89. Information for other years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All estimates of income are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes and some investment income on which tax is deducted at source. Estimates are based on the surveys of personal incomes for years up to 1986-87 and projections of the 1986-87 survey for subsequent years; the latter are, therefore, provisional.

I regret that information on the bottom five per cent. of taxpayers is not available.

Group of taxpayers

Year	Top 1 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 1 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 5 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 5 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 10 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 10 per cent. Share per cent.	Top 25 per cent. Amount £ billion	Top 25 per cent. Share per cent.	Bottom 70 per cent. Amount £ billion	Bottom 70 per cent. Share per cent.	All taxpayers Amount £ billion
Gross incomes before tax											
1978-79	5·1	5	15·0	15	24·3	24	45·9	45	51·0	50	102·8
1983-84	9·7	6	28·3	16	45·0	26	81·7	47	82·0	47	173·7
1984-85	10·9	6	31·4	17	49·6	26	89·3	47	88·8	47	188·8
1985-86	12·9	6	35·7	17	55·9	26	100·5	47	100·0	47	212·6
1986-87	15·1	7	40·8	17	63·2	27	112·5	48	107·3	46	232·9
1987-88[1]	16·7	7	45·2	18	70·1	27	124·5	49	116·7	46	255·8
1988-89[1]	19·0	7	51·3	18	79·4	28	140·4	49	129·8	45	286·5
Income tax liabilities											
1978-79	2·3	11	4·9	24	7·0	34	11·5	57	7·7	38	20·2
1983-84	3·8	11	8·5	26	12·2	36	19·5	58	12·5	38	33·4
1984-85	4·2	12	9·3	26	13·3	38	21·1	60	12·4	35	35·4
1985-86	5·0	13	10·6	27	14·8	38	23·2	60	13·6	35	38·8
1986-87	6·2	14	12·7	29	17·3	40	26·5	61	14·5	34	43·3
1987-88[1]	6·9	15	14·0	31	18·8	41	28·4	62	14·8	32	45·6
1988-89[1]	6·0	13	13·5	29	18·6	40	28·6	62	15·2	33	46·4

[1] Provisional; Includes estimates of occupational pension contributions and Investment Income not reported to tax offices.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total amount of tax recovered from tax investigations in each of the individual cases where the recovered amount exceeded £1 million.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The total amount of tax recovered from the 43 investigation cases settled in 1988-89 where in each case the amount recovered exceeded £1 million was £132 million.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the proportion of gross income paid in income tax, national insurance contributions and value added tax by *(a)* a married man with a non-earning wife and two children and *(b)* a married man with an earning wife and two children at one half one and half, two, three, five and 10 times national average earnings in 1989-90; and what were the comparable figures in 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested is in the table.

Married man with non-earning wife and two children

	Multiples of average male earnings						
Proportion of gross earnings:	½	1	1½	2	3	5	10
1978-79							
Income tax	−4·1	14·4	20·6	23·6	32·0	47·1	64·7
NICs	6·5	6·5	5·6	4·2	2·8	1·7	0·8
VAT	—	2·7	2·7	—	—	—	—
1989-90							
Income tax	−1·0	12·0	16·4	18·4	20·6	22·4	23·7
NICs	7·9	8·4	6·8	5·1	3·4	2·0	1·0
VAT	—	5·0	5·7	—	—	—	—
1978-79							
Income tax	−11·1	6·4	15·2	19·7	25·9	32·9	50·6
NICs	6·5	6·5	6·5	6·5	5·4	3·4	1·7
VAT	—	3·4	3·4	—	—	—	—
1989-90							
Income tax	−10·6	7·1	13·1	16·0	19·0	21·4	23·2
NICs	5·4	7·5	8·3	8·4	6·8	4·1	2·0
VAT	—	5·9	6·0	—	—	—	—

Notes:

(1) Average male earnings in 1989-90 are assumed to be £273·10 per week, 7½ per cent. higher than in 1988-89. This represents a real increase of over 30 per cent. since 1978-79.

(2) Child benefit is treated as a negative income tax.

(3) Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

(4) The two earner couple is assumed to have joint earnings equal to the various multiples of average earnings, split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

(5) The estimates of VAT are derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the range of 75 per cent. to 150 per cent. of average male earnings.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing tax and national insurance contributions less child benefit, where appropriate, for 1989-90, and comparable figures for 1988-89 and 1978-79, with the multiples of average earnings as half, two-thirds, one, five and 10 times for *(a)* a married couple with part-time working spouse, *(b)* a married couple plus two children with part-time working spouse and *(c)* a single person.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The information requested for a single person is given in the table. Figures for married couples with part-time working spouse have not been given, as they will depend on how much the part-time worker earns.

Payments of income tax and national insurance contributions by a single person (£ per week) in current prices
Multiples of average male earnings[1]

	½	⅔	1	5	10
1978-79	10·93	17·04	29·25	242·17	625·97
1988-89	30·67	45·10	73·87	459·94	968·14
[2]1989-90	31·53	47·03	77·96	492·81	1,039·01

[1] Full time males on adult rates (all occupations), using illustrative assumption of 7·5 per cent. growth in earnings between 1988-89 and 1989-90.

[2] Financial year average of pre- and post-October regimes for employees National Insurance Contributions.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer at the 1989-90 tax rates announced in the Budget of the married man's tax allowance in excess of the corresponding single person's allowance; how much of this cost is attributable to taxpayers aged below 65 years; and what is the weekly value of this extra relief to the married man paying income tax at the standard rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* The direct revenue cost, at 1989-90 levels of income, of the married man's allowance in excess of the single person's allowance is estimated at £4.9 billion, of which £4.1 billion is attributable to those aged under 65. The extra relief is worth £7.64 per week to a basic rate taxpayer not entitled to aged allowance.

Budget Gainers

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gain per individual arising from each relevant component of the 1989 Budget, both at current prices and net of indexation for those at one half and three-quarters of average earnings, average earnings, and one and a half, two, five and 10 times average earnings; and if he will provide comparable figures for each budget since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: *[holding answer 8 May 1989]:* Individuals will benefit directly or indirectly from many Budget measures. These gains will vary according to their specific circumstances, as well as their level of earnings, and it would be impracticable to attempt to estimate the effects of all the measures listed in table 4.1 of the 1989 Financial Statement and Budget Report, let alone for each Budget since 1979. Information on the effects of specific measures may be found in the press notices issued each Budget day by Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Medical Officers

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that any officers who have applied for medical officer training and are subject to disciplinary action are released as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The existence of disciplinary charges against prison officers awaiting transfer to hospital duties does not in itself preclude their posting. If the hon. Member has a specific case in mind, perhaps he could let me know.

Police Arrests

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were arrested by the police in the United Kingdom in 1988; how many of those arrested were cautioned and how many were charged, and if he will provide a breakdown by police force area.

Mr. John Patten: The available information on arrests is given in the table. Numbers of persons who were cautioned and numbers prosecuted in each police force area for indictable offences are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables: latest figures are for 1987 (table S3.7(a) for cautions and table S3.3(a) for prosecutions). The coverage of figures on arrests is wider than that of indictable offences, so arrests are not directly related to cautions or prosecutions. An arrest may not result in the arrested person being cautioned or prosecuted.

England and Wales 1987

Police force area	*Arrests*[1]
Avon and Somerset	36,290
Bedfordshire	15,694
Cambridgeshire	17,239
Cheshire	23,310
Cleveland	24,670
Cumbria	14,591
Derbyshire	20,126
Devon and Cornwall	27,704
Dorset	13,478
Durham	21,762
Essex	35,140
Gloucestershire	12,428
Greater Manchester	109,963

Police force area	Arrests[1]
Hampshire	52,052
Hertfordshire	20,538
Humberside	35,106
Kent	46,808
Lancashire	47,881
Leicestershire	20,945
Lincolnshire	17,282
London City of	3,702
Merseyside	54,088
Metropolitan Police	n.a.
Norfolk	17,232
Northamptonshire	14,193
Northumbria	60,206
North Yorkshire	16,656
Nottinghamshire	37,423
South Yorkshire	35,859
Staffordshire	34,585
Suffolk	12,010
Surrey	18,582
Sussex	32,448
Thames Valley	48,199
Warwickshire	10,625
West Mercia	25,027
West Midlands	93,562
West Yorkshire	70,640
Wiltshire	9,846
Dyfed-powys	8,803
Gwent	16,338
North Wales	18,092
South Wales	46,901
England and Wales	1,298,024

[1] Covers notifiable offences and some summary offences.
n.a. Not available.

Prison Officers Association

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he last met the chairman of the Prison Officers Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last invited the chairman of the Prison Officers Association (POA) to meet him on 29 September 1988. Discussion centred on the urgent need for prison officers to end industrial action which was contributing significantly to the unacceptably high number of prisoners—around 1,700—then being held in police cells. A number of more general points were also discussed.

Prisons (Disturbances)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the prisons in England and Wales where inmates have gone on to the prison roof during a disturbance within the prison during the last three years;

(2) if he will list each prison in England and Wales where there has been a disturbance among inmates for each of the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the three years up to 9 May, incidents involving a substantial number of inmates acting in concert and leading to significant damage occurred at the following prisons and remand centres:

10 May 1986 to 9 May 1987
Her Majesty's Prison, Wymott.

10 May 1987 to 9 May 1988
Her Majesty's Prison, Bedford.

10 May 1988 to 9 May 1989
Her Majesty's Prison, Ashwell.
Her Majesty's Prison, Canterbury.
Her Majesty's Prison, Haverigg.
Her Majesty's Youth Custody Centre and Remand Centre, Hindley.
Her Majesty's Prison, Lindholme.
Her Majesty's Prison, Northeye.
Her Majesty's Remand Centre, Risley.
Her Majesty's Prison, Rollestone.
Her Majesty's Prison, Swansea.

Inmates climbed on to the roof during two of these incidents—at Risley and at Canterbury (where one inmate climbed on to the roof).

Domestic Violence

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will consult police chief constables about the value of appointing domestic violence liaison officers in every division;

(2) if he will request police forces to have available an information leaflet on sources of help for victims of domestic violence and to offer it when appropriate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall be exploring with chief officers the scope for fresh guidance to the police about these and other issues identified in the recent Home Office research study on domestic violence.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what protection is available to victims of domestic violence if the case goes to court and the assailant is released before the court hearing; and if he has any plans to increase protection.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A defendant may be released on bail subject to any conditions which are considered necessary to prevent his interfering with witnesses or committing offences. If he breaches the conditions of bail, he may be re-arrested. The police also have discretion to provide suitable protection to the victims or witnesses of alleged offences where they consider it necessary. We have no plans to increase the existing protection provided by the police and courts.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many areas the police are involved in a multi-agency approach to the problem of domestic violence; and if he will take steps to encourage such development.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Comprehensive information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but I understand that the majority of police forces have arrangements which include helping victims of domestic violence to contact other agencies which can provide help and support. We shall be considering with the police whether anything more needs to be done.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will request police chief constables to record domestic violence incidents separately and to ensure that a note is taken of whether violence is used or threatened;

(2) if he will take steps to improve the police system of recording statistics on domestic disputes and domestic violence; and if he will ensure that a record is kept of the number and nature of calls for assistance coming from individual households where there have been allegations of domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall include the collection and use of records of domestic violence in discussions with chief officers.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a comprehensive national survey, backed up by local surveys, of domestic violence so as to provide improved information on its prevalence, nature, causes, handling by the authorities, and effect on the victim and enable the identification of more effective preventative measures.

Mr. John Patten: The ministerial group on women's issues will consider the need for further research when it meets next month.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he has given to the police to use when assessing which cases of domestic violence are passed to the Crown prosecution service for its decision on prosecution.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The criteria to be applied when considering whether charges should be brought in cases involving domestic violence are the same as for any other offence.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up a research study to investigate whether there is any difference in the likelihood of a police arrest when violence is domestic rather than non-domestic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend will consider the possibility of research in the context of discussions with chief officers about domestic violence.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any information on the proportion of requests for assistance from the police that are due to a domestic dispute.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Home Office records relate only to recorded crime, and not to all incidents to which the police are called.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is planning to reduce the escalation of domestic violence in the light of the finding in his Department's research study, "Domestic Violence", that domestic violence escalates over time.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer the right hon. Member to the reply given yesterday to a question from the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman).

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has regarding the percentage of cases of spousal homicide in which there had been earlier requests to the police for assistance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The information routinely collected on homicide cases does not enable us to establish whether the homicide was preceded by previous calls for police help.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the police force has received training in the handling of domestic violence; who has the responsibility for providing the training; who advises on its content; and who monitors how successful it is.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All new entrants to the police service in England and Wales receive a basic training in dealing with offences of domestic violence as part of their initial training at district training centres. For more senior ranks, there is a session on domestic violence in the inspectors' management development course. These courses will be monitored by the central planning and training unit and the forces themselves.

The provision of further training in forces is a matter for chief officers to decide. They will devise and update any training on the basis of their analysis of operational and training needs in their force area. Chief officers may invite other agencies—such as victim support schemes—to participate in in-force training if they consider that this would make a constructive contribution to the quality of training provided.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek information from the Tottenham police force regarding the effectiveness of its multi-agency approach to tackling domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Evaluating the effectiveness of the Tottenham unit is primarily a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. We shall, however, be seeking further information about the specialist units set up by the Metropolitan police, and about initiatives in other force areas, as part of our review of procedures to deal with domestic violence.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the Metropolitan police for a report on the effects of their 1987 guidelines which called for domestic violence to be treated as seriously as assaults occurring in the street.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Implementation of force orders within the Metropolitan police district is the responsibility of the Commissioner. I understand from the Commissioner that the force order relating to domestic violence is currently the subject of a full evaluation which is due to be completed by the autumn. My right hon. Friend is asking to be advised of the outcome.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there have been any police deaths when police have been called to assist with alleged domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Records for the years 1977 to 1987 show that 24 police officers were victims of homicide and that none of them died as a result of being called to incidents of alleged domestic violence. Records for 1988 and 1989 are not yet available.

Information about earlier homicides could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the last year for which figures are available, what percentage of incidents involving non-domestic violence are eventually recorded as *(a)* crime reports and *(b)* incident reports; and what are the corresponding figures for domestic violence.

Mr. John Patten: I regret the information requested is not available. Some information about the incidence, reporting and recording of domestic violence is published in Home Office research study 107, "Domestic Violence: an overview of the literature".

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the last period for which figures are available, in how many homicides was there *(a)* a female victim and *(b)* a male victim; and in what proportion, in each case, the murderer was a spouse, co-habitee or lover of the victim.

Mr. John Patten: Information on victims of homicide and their relationship to the subject is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (Chapter 4 of the latest issue, Cm. 498), a copy of which is in the Library. The table gives the figures requested for the years 1982-87.

Homicides currently recorded[1] in England and Wales in which the victim was the partner[2] of the principal suspect

Year	Male victims			Female victims		
	Total (=100 per cent.)	Killed by partner[2] Number	Killed by partner[2] Percentage	Total (=100 per cent.)	Killed by partner[2] Number	Killed by partner[2] Percentage
1982	299	15	5	258	120	47
1983	255	18	7	227	96	42
1984	296	17	6	241	102	42
1985	281	16	6	256	116	45
1986	322	17	5	254	123	49
1987	395	23	6	240	92	38

[1] As at 1 June 1988; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.
[2] Spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, lover, or former lover.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the last year for which figures are available, how many court orders were made under the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act 1978 to protect wives and children from violence; in what proportion of the cases a power of arrest was granted; and how many arrests were subsequently made.

Mr. John Patten: The available information relates to the number of orders made under sections 16(2), 16(3), 16(6) and 18 of the Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act 1978 in England and Wales. The latest figures are for 1987 and can be found in "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 20/88", a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not collected centrally on the number of subsequent arrests.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his estimate of the prevalence of assault arising from domestic dispute;

(2) what is his estimate, for the last year for which figures are available, of the proportion of the four types of assault, namely common assault, actual bodily harm, malicious wounding and grievous bodily harm, which arose from domestic disputes;

(3) if he will seek to improve the statistics about the prevalence of domestic violence by requesting a sample of chief constables to provide information on the total of all reports of domestic violence in a set period using all forms of police records;

(4) if he will take steps to enable the amount of violence that is domestic to be separately identified in the publication "Criminal Statistics".

Mr John Patten: An estimate of the national prevalence of domestic violence is not available. An ad hoc survey of offences of violence recorded by the police, identifying those offences which were domestic, was carried out in 1988 and it is hoped to publish estimates based on it later in the year.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what statistics he has on the number and percentage of times that allegedly assaulted women subsequently withdrew their complaints.

Mr John Patten: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of domestic violence have been pursued by the Crown prosecution service since the service started operating; and what were the comparable figures of prosecutions by the police over the period immediately before the Crown prosecution service came into operation.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible from the information held centrally by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Home Office to identify prosecutions in this category.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will recommend to chief constables that unless there are exceptional circumstances there should be an arrest in all cases of life-threatening domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is confident that the police make full use of their powers of arrest where people's lives are at stake. It will, however, be one of the issues covered in discussions with chief officers about domestic violence.

War Crimes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the Hetherington/Chalmers report on war crimes; when he expects to publish the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the replies given to questions from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 11 May 1989 and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) on 18 April 1989 at column *92*.

Antanas Geicas

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that Antanas Geicas does not leave the juridiction of United Kingdom courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has no powers to do so.

Hillsborough Disaster

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont Dark) of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 702, what steps he is taking to reimburse the South Yorkshire police authority for the costs arising from the public inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A meeting is to be held between Home Office officials and officers of the South Yorkshire police authority shortly to discuss the representations made by the authority over the costs of the inquiries being undertaken by the West Midlands police.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his reasons for retaining Aujeszky's disease in category 3 rather than moving it to category 1.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 2 May to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) at column *81*.

London Food Commission (Research)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by how much the European Commission has subsidised the London Food Commission's research into European consumers' demand for quality food; whether the questionnaire on 1992, "Consumers and Food Policy" is part of that research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The Commission of the European Communities has awarded the London Food Commission a contract to study and report on product differentiation in the European Community which involves issues of food standards, food quality and consumer choice. Although the EC Commission has also awarded a grant to meet the costs of this project, I have no precise information regarding its value. The 1992 questionnaire to which my hon. Friend refers is not part of this study and was circulated independently by the London Food Commission before the contract was awarded.

Pollution (Advice)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by year, how many farms in the three counties of Yorkshire were visited by his staff and advised about methods of controlling agricultural pollution in each of the last five years; and what percentage of farms this represents for these counties.

Mr. Ryder: Information is not available in the form requested. ADAS advisers have provided farmers with advice on control of agricultural pollution in response to specific requests, and in the course of advising on other matters.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action has been taken by his Department to give farmers information about bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle; and how many animals on average per week are being identified as having it.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information about BSE is available from the Ministry's animal health offices and is also provided by the veterinary officers who inspect each suspected case. In addition, information is disseminated through the farming and general press and media and to the farming unions and other farming organisations. On average, 140 to 150 cases are confirmed by post mortem examination each week.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are the procedures for determining whether cattle submitted for compensation under the bovine spongiform encephalopathy notification scheme are genuine suspected cases;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of cattle submitted as bovine spongiform encephalopathy suspect by their owners but not subsequently accepted as suspect for compensation purposes by ante-mortem veterinary inspection;

(3) what is the total number of bovine spongiform encephalopathy compensation claims submitted to his Department to date; what proportion of claims submitted have been met at *(a)* 100 per cent. and *(b)* 50 per cent. of the value of the animal; and what veterinary ante-mortem inspection takes place of cattle that are submitted under the notification procedure for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is a legal requirement for any owner or person in charge of an animal he suspects may have bovine spongiform encephalopathy to notify the divisional veterinary officer. The case is investigated and if BSE is suspected a restriction notice served confining the animal to the farm. A number of inspections may be necessary before the Ministry veterinary officer is able to decide whether the cause is BSE. If he is able to eliminate BSE as the cause restrictions are lifted. However if he is convinced that the animal is affected with BSE it is compulsorily slaughtered, the head removed so that the brain can be examined for definitive diagnosis and the carcase either incinerated or buried. Once slaughtered an automatic payment of 50 per cent. (up to a ceiling) of the valuation, undertaken when the animal was first put under restriction, is made. If BSE is not confirmed following examination of the brain the remaining 50 per cent. is paid.

The numbers of cattle put under restriction in the period 8 August 1988 (when the slaughter policy was introduced) to 5 May 1989 are as follows:

	Number
Restrictions imposed on suspect cases	4,794
Restrictions lifted because of alternative diagnosis	214
Suspect cases slaughtered	4,101
Suspect cases still under restriction	479
Of suspect cases slaughtered:	
positive cases	3,351
negative cases	329
Results pending	421

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) pursuant to his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *748*, on what dates and in respect of which period of time these cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle were reported to him;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *748*, what information his Department presented concerning the incidence and location of confirmation of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infection in cattle at slaughterhouses or fatstock markets.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The period of time concerned was provided in the answer given to the hon. Member on 14 April, at column *748*. The additional information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now taking and whether he intends in the near future to take any steps to monitor cattle at non-EEC export approved slaughterhouses for bovine spongiform encephalopathy infection.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The law requires any person who suspects bovine spongiform encephalopathy in an animal under his charge to notify the Ministry. This includes suspect BSE cases identified at slaughterhouses, details of which are being monitored.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all species of animals known by his Department to have been infected by transmittable spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 9 March at column *621*. BSE has also been transmitted into mice experimentally.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library details of each major publicity campaign mounted by his Department in 1985-86 and each successive year, including in each case the objectives of the campaign, the intended audience and the outcome of the monitoring of the achievement of the intended objectives, and national research conducted for him by the Central Office of Information together with a note of the intended objectives in the campaigns in 1989-90.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 2 May 1989]:* I have today placed the detailed information requested by the hon. Member in the Library. The information supplied covers all MAFF inspired publicity campaigns not just those which may be considered as "major".

SCOTLAND

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many projects in Scotland have been in receipt of European regional development fund aid in the period May 1979 to May 1989; and if he will list these in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 May 1989]:* Over 2,100 projects in Scotland have received European regional development fund assistance since May 1979. Awards in the same period have totalled over £736 million.

While it would not be practical to list every project in the *Official Report*, examples of major projects which have received funding are the awards of £18·6 million for the Western Isles Cable; £11·2 million for the Scottish exhibition centre in Glasgow; £6·4 million for the Edinburgh city bypass; £5·2 million for the Lochmaddy/Tarbert/Uig ferry and terminals; £2 million for the Carron valley reservoir, Stirling; and £1·7 million for the Windygates bypass, Kirkcaldy.

Also included in the overall project total are projects under the national programmes of community interest for Glasgow (£68·2 million award), Tayside (£20·7 million) and West Lothian (£26·7 million). In addition the 'non-quota' steel, shipbuilding and textile programmes attracted a total of £20 million in assistance.

Assessment of Achievement Programme (Report)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the 1984 assessment of achievement programme English report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The report will be published in May 1989, along with the reports on home economics and technical education.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the 1983 P4 sample used by Northern college researchers in the assessment of achievement programme —second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988, was numerically representative of all the divisions in Strathclyde and the remaining 11 regions and island education authority areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The sample was not a simple random sample of all Scottish P4 pupils in state supported schools. The sampling proceeded in two stages: first, a sample of primary schools was drawn; and second, from within these schools, samples of P4 pupils were drawn. The numbers of pupils, on which the statistical results of the survey have been reported, were properly representative of Scottish education authorities.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for both the 1983 and 1988 sample used in the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988, the proportions of schools in each of the 11 regions and islands education authority areas and for each education division of Strathclyde.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The assessment of achievement programme is not designed to provide comparisons between education authorities or between schools. The sample sizes used give reliable feedback on performance at national level only. Information relating to identified schools or education authorities is not released under the terms of an agreement with the Association of Directors of Education of Scotland (ADES).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether similar numbers of children with special needs were included in both the 1983 and 1988 samples used by Northern college in the research work carried out on the assesment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The sampling procedures used in 1983 and 1988 were designed to provide a nationally representative sample of pupils in mainstream state-supported schools.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount of money being spent annually on the assessment of achievement programme through which the Scottish Education Department monitors standards in Scottish schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Planned expenditure in 1989-90 is £170,000.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish details of the 1988 sampling used by Northern college in the research on assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988;

(2) if information on the social background of pupils was collected in 1988 as part of the research carried out by Northern college on the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forstyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Details of the sampling procedures will be included in the final report of the 1988 assessment of achievement programme second round mathematics project.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give details of the brief given to Northern college for the preparation of the interim report on changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988;

(2) if he will give the date when the steering committee responsible for the research programme carried out by the Northern college on the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988, agreed to ask for an interim report;

(3) if he will give the date on which the Northern college was asked to prepare the interim report on the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics —changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Preliminary analysis to provide a comparison of performance on common items used in 1983 and 1988 was carried out by the assessment of achievement programme central support unit, Scottish Council for Research in Education. This analysis was discussed at the assessment of achievement programme mathematics project steering committee meeting on 24 October 1988. The committee agreed to give this matter priority and the researchers were asked to prepare a paper which subsequently formed the basis of the interim report.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Northern college was asked to prepare an interim report on the internal research brief given to them on the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—change in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* An interim report was produced as a result of concerns arising from a preliminary analysis of the survey results.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any discussions took place between the Scottish Office and Northern college regarding the contents of the interim report changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988 before the report was published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Yes.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the names of the steering committee responsible for the research programme carried out by the Northern college on the assessment of achievement programme—second round mathematics—changes in performance at P4 and P7 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* The members of the 1988 assessment of achievement Programme mathematics project steering committee are:

	Position held
Mr. D. Dunn	Assistant Headteacher, Banff Academy, Grampian Regional Council
Mr. N. Henderson	Principal Adviser Primary Education, Lothian Regional Council
Mrs. S. Livingstone	Principal Teacher of Learning Support, Wallace High School, Central Regional Council
Mr. D. Macdonald	Mathematics Adviser, Highland Regional Council
Mrs. C. McWhirter	Headteacher, Gilburn Primary School, Tayside Regional Council
Mr. W. Mein	Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (Chairman)
Mr. G. Thorpe	Scottish Council for Research in Education
Mr. B. Semple	Principal Research Officer, SED.

Local Authority Services

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide capital allocations to regional authorities in order for them to improve services in areas which do not benefit from the full range of local authority services at present.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* Yes. On 27 February my right hon. and learned Friend announced capital allocations to regional councils for the year 1989-90 which were 16 per cent. above those for the previous financial year. This generous level of increase will enable regional councils to carry out capital works of well over £400 million in 1989-90. It is for authorities to distribute these resources in their areas, in the light of the needs of each region.

Community Charge

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to amend the law so that a lower

rate of community charge is paid by residents of areas which do not benefit from a full range of local authority services.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 May 1989]:* No. Local authorities that set the personal community charge payable in their areas at too high a level in relation to the level of services they provide will be accountable to their electorates. That is one of the main advantages of the community charge over the old domestic rating system.

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